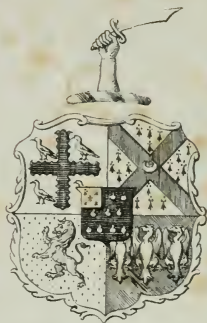


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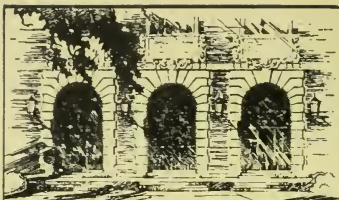
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THE
HEIR OF REDCLYFFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

‘THE TWO GUARDIANS,’ ‘HENRIETTA’S WISH,’
‘KENNETH,’ ‘THE KINGS OF ENGLAND.’

None of all the wreaths ye prize,
But was nurst by weeping skies;
Keen March winds, soft April showers,
Braced the roots, embalmed the flowers.
So, if e’er that second spring
Her green robe o’er you shall fling,
Stern self-mastery, tearful prayer,
Must the way of bliss prepare.
How should else earth’s flowerets prove
Meet for those pure crowns above?

LYRA INNOCENTIUM.

VOL. II.

THE SECOND EDITION, REVISED.

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THE

HEIR OF REDCLYFFE.

CHAPTER I.

They hadna sailed a league, a league,
A league, but barely three,
When the lift grew dark, and the wind grew loud,
And gurly grew the sea.

SIR PATRICK SPENS.—(*Old Ballad.*)

GUY'S evening with the Ashfords threw down many of the barriers in the way of intimacy. He soon made friends with the children, beginning with the two years old baby, and ending with gaining even the shy and sturdy Robin, who could not hold out any longer, when it appeared that Sir Guy could tell him the best place for finding sea-urchins, the present objects of his affections.

'But we should have to go through the park,' said Edward disconsolately, when Guy had described the locality.

'Well, why not?'

'We must not go into the park!' cried the children, in chorus.

'Not go into the park!' exclaimed Guy, looking at Mrs. Ashford, in amazement; then, as it flashed on him that it was his part to give leave, he added,—'I did not know I was such a dog in the manger. I thought all the parish walked naturally in the park. I don't

know what else it is good for. If Markham will lock it up, I must tell him to give you a key.'

The boys were to come, the next day—to be shown the way to the bay of urchins, and thenceforth they became his constant followers, to such a degree, that their parents feared they were very troublesome, but he assured them to the contrary, and no mother in the world could have found it in her heart to keep them away from so much happiness. There was continually a rushing home with a joyous outcry,—‘Mamma! Sir Guy gave me a ride on his horse!’ ‘Mamma! Sir Guy helped us to the top of that great rock!’ ‘Oh, papa! Sir Guy says we may come out shooting with him to-morrow, if you will let us!’ ‘Mamma! papa! look! Do you see? I shot this rabbit my own self, with Sir Guy’s gun!’ ‘Papa! papa! Sir Guy showed us his boat, and he says he will take us out to the Shag Rock, if you will give us leave!’

This was beyond what papa, still further beyond what mamma, could like, since the sea was often very rough in parts near the Shag; there were a good many sunken rocks, and boys, water, and rocks, did not appear by any means a safe conjunction, so Mrs. Ashford put the matter off for the present by the unseasonableness of the weather, and Mr. Ashford asked one or two of the fishermen how far they thought landing on the Shag a prudent attempt.

They did not profess to have often tried, they always avoided those rocks; but it could hardly be very dangerous, they said, for when Sir Guy was a boy, he used to be about there for ever, at first with an old boatman, and afterwards alone in his little boat. They had often wondered he was trusted there, but if any one knew the rocks, he did.

Still, Mrs. Ashford could not make up her mind to like the idea, and the boys came to Sir Guy in a state of great discomposure.

‘Never mind,’ he said, ‘perhaps we shall manage it

in the summer. We will get your father to go out with us himself, and, in the meantime, who likes to come with me after the rabbits in Cliffstone Copse? Father Holt will thank Robin for killing a dozen or so, for he makes grievous complaints of them.'

Guy conducted the boys out of sight of the sea, and, to console them, gave them so much more use of the gun than usual, that it might be considered as a wonder that he escaped being shot. Yet it did not prevent a few sighs being spent on the boating.

'Can't you forget it?' said Guy, smiling. 'You have no loss, after all, for we are likely to have no boating weather this long time. Hark! don't you hear the ground-swell?'

'What's that?' said the boys, standing still to listen to the distant surge, like a continuous low moan, or roar, far, far away, though there was no wind, and the sea was calm.

'It is the sound that comes before stormy weather,' said Guy; 'it is as if the sea was gathering up its forces for the tempest.'

'But what?—how? Tell me what it really is,' said Robin.

'I suppose it is the wind on the sea before it has reached us,' said Guy. 'How solemn it is!'

Too solemn for the boys, who began all manner of antics and noises, by way of silencing the impression of awfulness. Guy laughed, and joined in their fun; but as soon as they were gone home, he stood in silence for a long time, listening to the sound, and recalling the mysterious dreams and fancies with which it was connected in his boyhood, and which he had never wished thus to drive away.

The storm he had predicted came on; and by the evening of the following day, sea and wind were thundering, in their might, against the foot of the crags. Guy looked from the window, the last thing at night, and saw the stars twinkling over head with that ex-

treme brilliancy which is often seen in the intervals of fitful storms, and which suggested thoughts that sent him to sleep in a vague, soothing dream.

He was wakened by one tremendous continued roar of sea, wind, and thunder combined. Such was the darkness, that he could not see the form of the window, till a sheet of pale blue lightning brought it fully out for the moment. He sat up, and listened to the 'glorious voice' that followed it, thought what an awful night at sea, and remembered when he used to fancy it would be the height of felicity to have a shipwreck at Redclyffe, and shocked Mrs. Bernard by inhuman wishes that a ship would only come and be wrecked. How often had he watched, through sounds like these, for a minute gun! nay, he had once actually called up poor Arnaud in the middle of the night for an imaginary signal. Redclyffe bay was a very dangerous one, a fine place for a wreck, with its precipitous crags, its single safe landing-place, and the great Shag Stone on the eastern side, with a whole progeny of nearly sunken rocks, dreaded in rough weather by the fishermen themselves; but it was out of the ordinary track of vessels, and there were only a few traditions of terrible wrecks, long before his time.

It seemed as if he had worked up his fancy again, for the sound of a gun was for a moment in his ear. It was lost in the rush of hail against the window, and the moaning of the wind round the old house; but presently it returned, too surely to be imaginary. He sprang to the window, and the broad, flickering glare of lightning revealed the black cliff and pale sea-line; then all was dark and still, while the storm was holding its breath for the thunder-burst which in a few more seconds rolled overhead, shaking door and window throughout the house. As the awful sound died away, in the moment's lull, came the gun again. He threw up the window, and as the blast of wind and rain swept howling into the room, it brought another report.

To close the window, light his candle, throw on his clothes, and hasten down stairs, was the work of a very few seconds. Luckily, the key of the boat-house was lying on the table in the hall, where he had left it, after showing the boat to the Ashford boys; he seized it, caught up the pocket-telescope, put on a rough coat, and proceeded to undo the endless fastenings of the hall-door, a very patience-trying occupation; and, when completed, the gusts that were eddying round the house, ready to force their way in everywhere, took advantage of the first opening to blow out his candle.

However, they had in one way done good service, for the shower had been as brief as it was violent, and the inky cloud was drifting away furiously towards the east, leaving the moon visible, near her setting, and allowing her white cold light to shine forth, contrasting with the distant sheets of pale lightning, growing fainter and fainter.

Guy ran across the court, round to the west side of the house, and struggled up the slope in the face of the wind, which almost swept him down again, and when at length he had gained the summit, came rushing against him with such force that he could hardly stand. He did, however, keep his ground, and gazed out over the sea. The swell was fearful, marked by the silver light on one side, where it caught the moonbeams, and the black shade on the other, ever alternating, so that the eye could not fix on them for a moment; the spray leapt high in its whiteness, and the Shag stood up hard, bold, and black. The waves thundered, bursting on the cliff; and, high as he stood, the spray dashed almost blinding in his face, while the wind howled round him, as if gathering its might for the very purpose of wrenching him from the cliff; but he stood firm, and looked out again, to discern clearly what he thought he had seen. It was the mast of a vessel, seen plainly against the light silvery distance of sea on the reef west of the Shag. It was in a slanting direction,

and did not move; he could not doubt that the ship had struck on the dangerous rocks at the entrance of the bay; and as his eyes became more accustomed to the unusual light, and made out what objects were or were not familiar, he could perceive the ship herself. He looked with the glass, but could see no one on board, nor were any boats in sight; but observing some of the lesser rocks, he beheld some moving figures on them. Help!—instant help!—was his thought; and he looked towards the Cove. Lights were in the cottage windows, and a few sounds came up to him, as if the fishing population were astir.

He hastened to the side of the cliff, which was partly clothed with brushwood. There was a descent—it could hardly be called a path—which no one ventured to attempt but himself and a few of the boldest birds'-nesting boys of the village; but he could lose no time, and scrambling, leaping, swinging himself by the branches, he reached the foot of the cliff in safety, and in five minutes more was on the little quay at the end of the steep street of the Cove.

The quay was crowded with the fisher-people, and there was a strange confusion of voices, some saying all was lost; some, that the crew had got to the rock; others, that some one ought to put off and help them; others, that a boat would never live in such a sea, and an old telescope was in great requisition.

Ben Robinson, a tall, hardy young man, of five-and-twenty, wild, reckless, high-spirited, and full of mischief and adventure, was standing on a pile at the extreme verge above the foaming water, daring the others to go with him to the rescue; and though Jonas Ledbury, a feeble old man was declaring, in a piteous tone, it was a sin and a shame to let so many poor creatures be lost in sight without one man stirring to help them, yet all stood irresolute, watching the white breakers dashing on the Shag, and the high waves that swelled and rolled between.

‘Do you know where the crew are?’ exclaimed Guy,

shouting as loud as he could, for the noise of the winds and waves was tremendous.

'There, sir, on the flat black stone,' said the fortunate possessor of the telescope. 'Some ten or eleven of them, I fancy, all huddled together.'

'Ay, ay!' said old Ledbury. 'Poor creatures! there they be; and what is to be done, I can't say! I never saw a boat in such a sea, since the night poor Jack, my brother, was lost, and Will Ray with him.'

'I see them,' said Guy, who had in the meantime looked through his glass. 'How soon is high water?'

It was an important question, for the rocks round the Shag were covered before full tide, even when the water was still. There was a looking up at the moon, and then Guy and the fishermen simultaneously exclaimed, that it would be in three hours; which gave scarcely an hour to spare.

Without another word, Guy sprang from the quay to the boat-house, unlocked it, and, by example, showed that the largest boat was to be brought out. The men helped him vigorously, and it stood on the narrow, pebbly beach, the only safe landing-place in the whole bay; he threw into it a coil of rope, and called out in his clear, commanding voice, 'Five to go with me!'

Hanging back was at an end. They were brave men, who had wanted nothing but a leader; and with Sir Guy at their head, were ready for anything. Not five, but five-and-twenty, were at his command; and even in the hurry of the moment, a strong, affectionate feeling filled his eyes with tears as he saw these poor fellows ready to trust their lives in his hands.

'Thank you, thank you!' he exclaimed. 'Not all, though: you, Ben Robinson, Harry Ray, Charles Ray, Ben Ledbury, Wat Green.'

They were all young men, without families, such as could best be spared; and, each as his name was called, answered, 'Here, Sir Guy!' and came forward with a resolute, satisfied air.

'It would be best to have a second boat,' said Guy.

‘Mr. Brown,’ to the owner of the telescope, ‘will you lend yours? ’tis the strongest and lightest. Thank you. Martin had best steer it, he knows the rocks;’ and he went on to name the rest of the crew; but at the last, there was a moment’s pause, as if he doubted.

A tall, athletic young fisherman took advantage of it to press forward.

‘Please your honour, Sir Guy, may not I go?’

‘Better not, Jem,’ answered Guy. ‘Remember,’ in a lower voice, ‘your mother has no one but you. Here!’ he called, cheerfully, ‘Jack Horn, you pull a good oar! Now, then, are we ready?’

‘All ready,—yes, sir!’

The boat was launched, not without great difficulty, in the face of such a sea. The men stoutly took their oars, casting a look forward at the rocks, then at the quay, and on the face of their young steersman. Little they guessed the intense emotion that swelled in his breast as he took the helm, to save life or to lose it; enjoying the enterprise, yet with the thought that his lot might be early death; glad it was right thus to venture, earnest to save those who had freely trusted to him, and rapidly, though most earnestly, recalling his own repentance. All this was in his mind, though nothing was on his face but cheerful resolution.

Night though it was, tidings of the wreck had reached the upper part of the village; and Mr. Ashford, putting his head out of his window to learn the cause of the sounds in the street, was informed by many voices that a ship was on the Shag reef, and that all were lost. To hasten to the Cove to learn the truth, and see if any assistance could yet be afforded, was his instant thought; and he had not taken many steps before he was overtaken by a square, sturdy figure, wrapped in an immense great coat.

‘So, Mr. Markham, you are on your way to see about this wreck.’

‘Why, ay,’ said Markham, roughly, though not with the repellant manner usual with him towards Mr. Ash-

ford, 'I must be there, or that boy will be in the thickest of it. Wherever is mischief, there is he. I only wonder he has not broken his neck long ago.'

'By mischief, you mean danger?'

'Yes. I hope he has not heard of this wreck, for if he has, no power on earth would keep him back from it.'

Comparing the reports they had heard, the clergyman and steward walked on, Markham's anxiety actually making him friendly. They reached the top of the steep street of the Cove; but though there was a good view of the sea from thence, they could distinguish nothing, for another cloud was rising, and had obscured the moon. They were soon on the quay, now still more crowded, and heard the exclamations of those who were striving to keep their eyes on the boats.

'There's one!' 'No!' 'Yes, 'tis!' 'That's Sir Guy's!'

'Sir Guy!' exclaimed Markham. 'You don't mean he is gone? Then I am too late! What could you be thinking of, you old fool, Jonas, to let that boy go? You'll never see him again, I can tell you. Mercy! Here comes another squall! There's an end of it, then!'

Markham seemed to derive some relief from railing at the fishermen singly and collectively, while Mr. Ashford tried to learn the real facts, and gather opinions as to the chance of safety. The old fishermen held that there was frightful risk, though the attempt was far from hopeless; they said the young men were all good at their oars, Sir Guy knew the rocks very well, and the chief fear was, that he might not know how to steer in such a sea; but they had seen that, though daring, he was not rash. They listened submissively to Mr. Markham, but communicated in an under tone to the vicar how vain it would have been to attempt to restrain Sir Guy.

'Why, sir,' said old James Robinson, 'he spoke just like the captain of a man-of-war; and for all Mr.

Markham says, I don't believe he'd have been able to gainsay him.'

'Your son is gone with him?'

'Ay, sir; and I would not say one word to stop him. I know Sir Guy won't run him into risk for nothing; and I hope, please God, if Ben comes back safe, it may be the steadying of him.'

'Twas he that volunteered to go, before Sir Guy came, they say?'

'Yes, sir,' said the old man, with a pleased yet melancholy look. 'Ben's brave enough; but there's the difference. He'd have done it for the lark, and to dare the rest; but Sir Guy does it with thought, and because it is right. I wish it may be the steadying of Ben!'

The shower rushed over them again, shorter and less violent than the former one, but driving in most of the crowd, and only leaving on the quay the vicar, the steward, and a few of the most anxious fishermen. They could see nothing; for the dark, slanting line of rain swept over the waves, joining together the sea and thick low cloud, and the roaring of the sea and moaning of the wind were fearful. No one spoke, till at last the black edges of the Shag loomed clearer, the moon began to glance through the skirts of the cloud, and the heaving and tossing of the sea became more discernible.

'There! there!' shouted young Jem, the widow's son.

'The boats?'

'One!'

'Where? Where?—for heaven's sake! That's nothing!' cried Markham.

'Yes, yes! I see both,' said Jem. 'The glass! Where's Mr. Brown's glass?'

Markham was trying to fix his own, but neither hand nor eye were steady enough; he muttered,—'Hang the glass!' and paced up and down in uncontrollable anxiety. Mr. Ashford turned with him, trying to speak consolingly, and entirely liking the old man.

Markham was not ungrateful ; but he was almost in despair.

‘It is the same over again!’ said he. ‘He is the age his father was, though Mr. Morville never was such as he—never,—how should he? He is the last of them—the best—he would have been—he was. Would to heaven I was with him, that, if he is lost, we might all go together.’

‘There, sir,’ called Jem, who, being forbidden to do anything but watch, did so earnestly ; ‘they be as far now as opposite West Cove. Don’t you see them, in that light place?’

The moon had by this time gone down, but the first grey light of dawn was beginning to fall on the tall Shag, and show its fissures and dark shades, instead of leaving it one hard, unbroken mass. Now and then, Jem thought he saw the boats ; but never so distinctly as to convince the watchers that they had not been swamped among the huge waves that tumbled and foamed in that dangerous tract.

Mr. Ashford had borrowed Markham’s telescope, and was looking towards the rock, where the shipwrecked crew had taken refuge.

‘There is some one out of the boat, climbing on the rocks. Can you make him out, Jem?’

‘I see, I see,’ said Mr. Brown ; ‘there are two of them. They are climbing along the lee side of the long ridge of rocks.’

‘Ay, ay,’ said old Ledbury ; ‘they can’t get in a boat close to the flat rocks, they must take out a line. Bold fellows!’

‘Where are the boats?’ asked Mr. Ashford.

‘I can tell that,’ said Ledbury ; ‘they must have got under the lee of the lesser Shag. There’s a ring there that Sir Guy had put in to moor his boat to. They’ll be made fast there, and those two must be taking the rope along that ledge, so as for the poor fellows on the rock to have a hold of, as they creep along to where the boats are.’

‘Those broken rocks!’ said Mr. Ashford. ‘Can there be a footing, and in such a sea?’

‘Can you give a guess who they be, sir,’ asked Robinson, earnestly. ‘If you’d only let Jem have a look, maybe he could guess.’

Markham’s glass was at his service.

‘Hollo! what a sea. I see them now. That’s Ben, going last—I know his red cap. And the first—why, ’tis Sir Guy himself!’

‘Don’t be such a fool, Jem,’ cried Markham, angrily. ‘Sir Guy knows better. Give me the glass.’

But when it was restored, Markham went on spying in silence, while Brown, keeping fast possession of his own telescope, communicated his observations.

‘Ay, I see them. Where are they? He’s climbing now. There’s a breaker just there, will wash them off, as sure as they’re alive! I don’t see ’em. Yes, I do—there’s Redcap! There’s something stirring on the rock!’

So they watched till, after an interval, in which the boats disappeared behind the rocks, they were seen advancing over the waters again—one—yes—both, and loaded. They came fast, they were in sight of all, growing larger each moment, mounting on the crest of the huge rolling waves, then plunged in the trough so long as to seem as if they were lost, then rising—rising high as mountains. Over the roaring waters came at length the sound of voices, a cheer, pitched in a different key from the thunder of wind and wave; they almost fancied they knew the voice that led the shout. Such a cheer as rose in answer, from all the Redclyffe villagers, densely crowded on quay, and beach, and every corner of standing ground.

The sun was just up, his beams gilded the crests of the leaping waves, and the spray danced up, white and gay, round the tall rocks, whose shadow was reflected in deep green, broken by the ever-moving swell. The Shag and its attendant rocks, and the broken vessel, were bathed in the clear morning light; the sky was of

a beautiful blue, with magnificent masses of dark cloud, the edges, where touched by the sun-beams, of a pearly white; and across the bay, tracing behind them glittering streams of light, came up the two boats, with their freight of rescued lives.

Martin's boat was the first to touch the landing-place.

'All saved,' he said; 'all owing to him,' pointing back to Sir Guy.

There was no time for questions; the wan, drenched sailors had to be helped on shore, and the boat hauled up out of the way. In the meantime, Guy, as he steered in past the quay, smiled and nodded to Mr. Ashford and Markham, and renewed the call, 'All safe!' Mr. Ashford thought he had never seen anything brighter than his face—the eyes radiant in the morning sun, the damp hair hanging round it, and life, energy, and promptitude in every feature and movement.

The boat came in, the sailors were assisted out, partly by their rescuers, partly by the spectators. Guy stood up, and, with one foot on the seat, supported on his knee and against his arm a little boy, round whom his great coat was wrapt.

'Here, Jem!' he shouted, to his rejected volunteer, who had been very active in bringing in the boat, 'here's something for you to do. This poor little fellow has got a broken arm. Will you ask your mother to take him in? She's the best nurse in the parish. And send up for Mr. Gregson.'

Jem received the boy as tenderly as he was given; and, with one bound, Guy was by the side of his two friends. Mr. Ashford shook hands with heartfelt gratulation, Markham exclaimed,—

'There, Sir Guy, after the old fashion! Never was man so mad in this world! I've done talking! You'll never be content till you have got your death. As if no one could do anything without you.'

'Was it you who carried out the line on the rock?' said Mr. Ashford.

‘Ben Robinson and I. I had often been there, after sea anemones and weeds, and I had a rope round me, so don’t be angry, Markham.’

‘I have no more to say,’ answered Markham, almost surly. ‘I might as well talk to a sea-gull at once. As if you had any right to throw away your life!’

‘I enjoyed it too much to have anything to say for myself,’ said Guy; ‘besides, we must see after these poor men. There were two or three nearly drowned. Is no one gone for Mr. Gregson?’

Mr. Gregson, the doctor, was already present, and no one who had any authority could do anything but attend to the disposal of the shipwrecked crew. Mr. Ashford went one way, Markham another, Guy a third; but, between one cottage and another, Mr. Ashford learnt some particulars. The crew had been found on a flat rock, and the fishermen had at first thought all their perils in vain, for it was impossible to bring the boats up, on account of the rocks, which ran out in a long reef. Sir Guy, who knew the place, steered to the sheltered spot where he had been used to make fast his own little boat, and undertook to make his way from thence to the rock where the crew had taken refuge, carrying a rope to serve as a kind of hand-rail, when fastened, from one rock to the other. Ben insisted on sharing his peril, and they had crept along the slippery, broken reefs, lashed by the surge, for such a distance that the fishermen shuddered as they spoke of the danger of being torn off by the force of the waves, and dashed against the rocks. Nothing else could have saved the crew. They had hardly accomplished the passage through the rising tide, even with the aid of the rope and the guidance of Sir Guy and Ben, and, before the boats had gone half a mile on their return, the surge was tumbling furiously over the stones where they had been found.

The sailors were safely disposed of, in bed, or by the fireside, the fishers vying in services to them. Mr. Ashford went to the cottage of Charity Ledbury, Jem’s

mother, to inquire for the boy with the broken arm. As he entered the empty kitchen, the opposite door of the stairs was opened, and Guy appeared, stepping softly, and speaking low.

‘Poor little fellow!’ he said; ‘he is just going to sleep. He bore it famously!’

‘The setting his arm?’

‘Yes. He was quite sensible, and very patient, and that old Charity Ledbury is a capital old woman. She and Jem are delighted to have him, and will nurse him excellently. How are all the others? Has that poor man come to his senses?’

‘Yes. I saw him safe in bed at old Robinson’s. The captain is at the Browns’.

‘I wonder what time of day it is?’

‘Past eight. Ah! there is the bell beginning. I was thinking of going to tell Master Ray we are not too much excited to remember church-going this morning; but I am glad he has found it out only ten minutes too late. I must make haste. Good bye!’

‘May not I come too, or am I too strange a figure?’ said Guy, looking at his dress, thrown on in haste, and saturated with sea-water.

‘May you?’ said Mr. Ashford, smiling. ‘Is it wise, with all your wet things?’

‘I am not given to colds,’ answered Guy, and they walked on quickly for some minutes; after which he said, in a low voice and hurried manner,—‘would you make some mention of it in the Thanksgiving?’

‘Of course I will,’ said Mr. Ashford, with much emotion. ‘The danger must have been great.’

‘It was,’ said Guy, as if the strong feeling would show itself. ‘It was most merciful. That little boat felt like a toy at the will of the winds and waves, till one recollected who held the storm in His hand.’

He spoke very simply, as if he could not help it, with his eye fixed on the clear eastern sky, and with a tone of grave awe and thankfulness which greatly struck Mr. Ashford, from the complete absence of

self-consciousness, or from any attempt either to magnify or depreciate his sense of the danger.

‘You thought the storm a more dangerous time than your expedition on the rock?’

‘It was not. The fishermen, who were used to such things, did not think much of it; but I am glad to have been out on such a night, if only for the magnificent sensation it gives to realize one’s own powerlessness and His might. As for the rock, there was something to do to look to one’s footing, and cling on; no time to think.’

‘It was a desperate thing!’

‘Not so bad as it looked. One step at a time is all one wants, you know, and that there always was. But what a fine fellow Ben Robinson is! He behaved like a regular hero—it was the thorough contempt and love of danger one reads of. There must be a great deal of good in him, if one only knew how to get hold of it.’

‘Look there!’ was Mr. Ashford’s answer, as he turned his head at the church wicket; and, at a short distance behind, Guy saw Ben himself walking up the path, with his thankful, happy father, a sight that had not been seen for months, nay, for years.

‘Ay,’ he said, ‘such a night as this, and such a good old man as the father, could not fail to bring out all the good in a man.’

‘Yes,’ thought Mr. Ashford, ‘such a night, under such a leader! The sight of so much courage based on that foundation is what may best touch and save that man.’

After church, Guy walked fast away; Mr. Ashford went home, made a long breakfast, having the whole story to tell, and was off to the scene of action again, where he found the master, quite restored, and was presently joined by Markham. Of Sir Guy, there was no news, except that Jem Ledbury said he had looked in after church to know how the cabin-boy was going on, and the master, understanding that he had been the leader in the rescue, was very anxious to thank

him, and walked up to the house with Markham and Mr. Ashford.

Markham conducted them straight to the library, the door of which was open. He crossed the room, smiled, and made a sign to Mr. Ashford, who looked in some surprise and amusement. It has been already said that the room was so spacious that the inhabited part looked like a little encampment by the fire, though the round table was large, and the green leather sofa and arm-chair were cumbrous.

However, old Sir Guy's arm-chair was never used by his grandson; Markham might sit there, and Bustle did sometimes, but Guy always used one of the unpretending, unluxurious chairs, which were the staple of the room. This, however, was vacant, and on the table before it stood the remains of breakfast, a loaf reduced to half its dimensions, an empty plate and coffee-cup. The fire was burnt down to a single log, and on the sofa, on all the various books with which it was strewed, lay Guy, in anything but a comfortable position, his head on a great dictionary, fairly overcome with sleep; his very thick, black eyelashes resting on his fresh, bright cheek, and the relaxation of the grave expression of his features making him look even younger than he really was.

He was so sound asleep that it was not till some movement of Markham's that he awoke, and started up, exclaiming,—

‘What a horrid shame! I am very sorry!’

‘Sorry! what for?’ said Markham. ‘I am glad, at any rate, you have been wise enough to change your things, and eat some breakfast.’

‘I meant to have done so much,’ said Guy; ‘but sea-wind makes one so sleepy!’ Then, perceiving the captain, he came forward, hoping he was quite recovered.

The captain stood mystified, for he could not believe this slim youth could be the Sir Guy of whose name he had heard so much, and, after answering the inquiry, he began,—

‘If I could have the honour of seeing Sir Guy——’
‘Well?’ said Guy.

‘I beg your pardon, sir!’ said the captain, while they all laughed; ‘I did not guess you could be so young a gentleman. I am sure, sir, ’tis what any man might be proud of having done, and—— I never saw anything like it!’ he added, with a fresh start, ‘and it will do you honour everywhere. All our lives are owing to you, sir.’

Guy did not cut him short, though very glad when it was over. He felt he should not, in the captain’s place, like to have his thanks shortened, and besides, if ever there was happiness or exultation, it was in the glistening eyes of old Markham, the first time he had ever been able to be justly proud of one of the family, whom he loved with so much faithfulness and devotion.

CHAPTER II.

Is there a word, or jest, or game,
But time encrusteth round
With sad associate thoughts the same?

ELIZABETH BARETT BROWNING.

AMONG the persons who spent a forlorn autumn was Mr. Ross, though his troubles were not quite of the same description as those of his young parishioners. He missed his daughter very much; all his household affairs got out of order, the school-girls were naughty, and neither he nor Miss Edmonstone, nor the mistress, could discover the culprits, their inquiries produced nothing but a wild confusion of mutual accusations, where the truth was undistinguishable. The cook never could find anything to make broth of; Mr. Ross could never lay his hands on the books he wanted for himself or anybody else, and lastly, none of his shirts ever had their buttons on.

Mary, meanwhile, had to remain through a whole course of measles, then to greet the arrival of a new nephew, and to attend his christening; but she had made a vow that she would be at home by Christmas, and she kept it.

Mr. Ross had the satisfaction of fetching her home from the station the day before Christmas Eve, and of seeing her opposite to him, on her own side of the table, in the evening, putting on the buttons, and considering

it an especial favour and kindness, for which to be for ever grateful, that he had written all his Christmas sermons beforehand, so as to have a whole evening clear before her. He was never a great letter-writer, and Mary had a great deal to hear, for all that had come to her were the main facts, with very few details.

‘I have had very few letters even from Hollywell,’ said she. ‘I suppose it is on account of Charles’s illness. You think him really better?’

‘Yes, much better. I forgot to tell you, you are wanted for their Christmas party to-morrow night.’

‘Oh! he is well enough for them not to put it off! Is he able to be out of bed?’

‘No, he lies perfectly flat, and looks very thin. It has been a very severe illness. I don’t think I ever knew him suffer so much, but, at the same time, I never knew him behave so well, or show so much patience, and consideration for other people. I was the more surprised, because at first he seemed to have relapsed into all the ways we thought he had shaken off; he was so irritable and fretful that poor Mrs. Edmonstone looked worn out; but it seems to have been only the beginning of the illness; it was very different after he was laid up.’

‘Has he had you to see him?’

‘Yes, he asked for it, which he never did before, and Amabel reads to him every morning. There is certainly much more than is satisfactory about those young Edmonstones than there once seemed reason to expect.’

‘And now tell me about Sir Guy. What is the matter? Why does he not come home this winter?’

‘I cannot tell you the rights of it, Mary. Mr. Edmonstone is very much offended about something he is reported to have said, and suspects him of having been in mischief at St. Mildred’s, but I am not at all persuaded that it is not one of Mr. Edmonstone’s affronts.’

‘Where is he?’

‘At Redclyffe. I have a letter from him which I am going to answer to-night. I shall tell the Edmonstones about it, for I cannot believe that, if he had been guilty of anything very wrong, his mind would be occupied in this manner;’ and he gave Mary the letter.

‘Oh, no!’ exclaimed Mary, as she read; ‘I am sure he cannot be in mischief. What an admirable person he is! I am very sorry this cloud has arisen! I was thinking last summer how happy they all were together.’

‘Either this or Charles’s illness has cast a gloom on the whole house. The girls are both grown much graver.’

‘Amy graver?’ said Mary, quickly.

‘I think so. At least she did not seem to cheer up as I should have expected when her brother grew better. She looks as if she had been nursing him too closely, and yet I see her walking a good deal.’

‘Poor little Amy!’ said Mary, and she asked no more questions, but was anxious to make her own observations.

She did not see the Edmonstones till the next evening, as the day was wet, and she only received a little note, telling her that the carriage would be sent to fetch her and Mr. Ross. The whole of the family, except Charles, were in the drawing-room, but Mary looked chiefly at Amy. She was in white, with holly in her hair, and did not look sorrowful; but she was paler and thinner than last summer, and though she spoke, smiled, and laughed when she ought, it was without the gay, childish freedom of former times. She was a small, pale, quiet girl now, not a merry, caressing kitten. Mary recollected what she had been in the wood last summer, and was sure it was more than Charles’s illness that had altered her, yet still Amy had not Laura’s harassed look.

Mary had not much talk with Amy, for it was a large party, with a good many young ladies and children, and Amy had a great deal of work in the way of

amusing them. She had a wearied look, and was evidently exerting herself to the utmost.

‘You look tired,’ said Mary, kindly.

‘No, it is only stupidity,’ said Amy, smiling rather sadly. ‘We can’t be entertaining without Charlie.’

‘It has been a melancholy winter,’ began Mary, but she was surprised, for Amy’s face and neck coloured in a moment; then, recovering herself, with some hesitation she said,—‘Oh! but Charlie is much better, and that is a great comfort. I am glad you are come home, Mary.’

‘We are going to have some magic music,’ was said at the other end of the room; ‘who will play?’

‘Little Amy!’ said Mr. Edmonstone. ‘Where is she? She always does it to admiration. Amy, come and be performer.’

Amy rose, and came forward, but the colour had flushed into her cheeks again, and the recollection occurred to Mary that her fame as a performer, in that way, arose from the very amusing manner in which she and Sir Guy had conducted the game last year. At the same moment her mother met her, and whispered,—

‘Had you rather not, my dear?’

‘I can do it, mamma, thank you—never mind.’

‘I should like to send you up to Charlie—he has been so long alone.’

‘Oh! thank you, dear mamma,’ with a look of relief.

‘Here is Charlotte wild to be musician,’ said Mrs. Edmonstone. ‘Perhaps you will see how she can manage; for I think Charles must want a visit from his little nurse.’

Amy moved quietly away, and entered Charles’s room, full of warm gratitude for the kindness which was always seeking how to spare her.

Charles was asleep, and throwing a shawl round her, she sat down in the dim light of the lamp, relieved by the stillness, only broken by now and then a louder note of the music down stairs. It was very comfortable after all that buzz of talk, and the jokes that

seemed so nonsensical and tiresome. There were but two people who could manage to make a party entertaining, and that was the reason it was so different last year. Then Amy wondered if she was the only person who felt sick at heart and dreary; but she only wondered for a moment—she murmured half aloud to herself, ‘I said I never would think of him except at my prayers! Here I am doing it again, and on Christmas night. I won’t hide my eyes and moan over my broken reed; for Christmas is come, and the circles of song are widening round! Glory! good will, peace on earth! How he sang it last year, the last thing, when the people were gone, before we went up to bed. But I am breaking my resolution again. I must do something.’

She took up a book of sacred poetry, and began to learn a piece which she already nearly knew; but the light was bad, and it was dreamy work; and probably she was half asleep, for her thoughts wandered off to Sintram and the castle on the Mondenfelsen, which seemed to her like what she had pictured the Redclyffe crags, and the castle itself was connected in her imagination with the deep, echoing porch, while Guy’s own voice seemed to be chanting—

Who lives forlorn,
On God’s own word doth rest;
His path is bright
With heavenly light,
His lot among the blest.

‘Are you there, Amy?’ said Charles, waking. ‘What are you staying here for? Don’t they want you?’

‘Mamma was so kind as to send me up.’

‘I am glad you are come, for I have something to tell you. Mr. Ross has been up to see me, you know, and he has a letter from Guy.’ Amy’s heart beat fast, and with eyes fixed on the ground, she listened, as Charles continued to give an account of Guy’s letter about Coombe Prior. ‘Mr. Ross is quite satisfied about him, Amy,’ he concluded. ‘I wish you could

have heard the decided way in which he said, 'He will *live* it down.'

Amy's answer was to stoop down and kiss her brother's forehead.

Another week brought Guy's renewal of the correspondence.

'Amy, here is something for you to read,' said Charles, holding up the letter as she came into the room.

She knew the writing. 'Wait one moment, Charlie, dear;' and she ran out of the room, found her mother fortunately alone, and said, averting her face, 'Mamma, dear, do you think I ought to let Charlie show me that letter?'

Mrs. Edmonstone took hold of her hand, and drew her round so as to look into the face through its veiling curls. The hand shook, and the face was in a glow of eagerness. 'Yes, dearest!' said she, for she could not help it; and then, as Amy ran back again, she asked herself whether it was foolish, and bad for her sweet little daughter; then declared to herself that it must—it should—it would come right.

There was not a word of Amy in the letter, but it, or something else, made her more bright and cheerful than she had been for some time past. It seemed as if the lengthening days of January were bringing renewed comfort with them, when Charles, who ever since October had been confined to bed, was able to wear the Chinese dressing-gown, be lifted to a couch, and wheeled into the dressing-room, still prostrate, but much enjoying the change of scene, which he called coming into the world.

These were the events at quiet Hollywell, while Redclyffe was still engrossed with the shipwreck, which seemed to have come on purpose to enliven and occupy this solitary winter. It perplexed the Ashfords about their baronet more than ever. Mr. Ashford said that no one whose conscience was not clear could have confronted danger as he had done; and yet the cer-

tainty that he was under a cloud, and the sadness, so inconsistent with his age and temperament, still puzzled them. Mrs. Ashford thought, however, that she made a discovery. The second day after the wreck, the whole crew, except the little cabin-boy, were going to set off to the nearest sea-port; and the evening preceding their departure, they were to meet their rescuers, the fishermen, at a supper in the great servants' hall at the park. Edward and Robert were in great glory, bringing in huge branches of evergreens to embellish the very clean, cold place, and Mr. and Mrs. Ashford and Grace were to come to see the entertainment, after having some coffee in the library.

Guy prepared it for his company by tumbling his books headlong from the sofa to a more remote ottoman, sticking a bit of holly on the mantel-shelf, putting out his beloved old friend, Strutt's 'Sports and Pastimes,' to amuse Grace, and making up an immense fire; and then, looking round, thought the room was uncommonly comfortable; but the first thing that struck Mrs. Ashford, when, with face beaming welcome, he ushered her in from the great hall, was, how forlorn rooms looked that had not a woman to inhabit them.

The supper went off with great *éclat*. Arnaud at the head of the table carved with foreign courtesies that contrasted with the downright, bluff way of the sailors. As soon as Sir Guy brought Mrs. Ashford to look in on them, old James Robinson proposed his health, with hopes he would soon come and live among them for good, and Jonas Ledbury added another wish that 'Lady Morville' might soon be there too. At those words, an expression of pain came upon Guy's face; his lips were rigidly pressed together; he turned hastily away, and paced up and down before he could command his countenance. All were so busy cheering, that no one heeded his change of demeanour save Mrs. Ashford; and though, when he returned to the place where he had been standing, his complexion was deepened, his lip quivered, and his voice trembled in returning thanks, Mr. Ash-

ford only saw the emotion naturally excited by his people's attachment.

The lady understood it better; and when she talked it over with her husband in the evening, they were convinced the cause of his trouble must be some unfortunate attachment, which he might think it his duty to overcome; and having settled this, they became very fond of him, and anxious to make Redclyffe agreeable to him.

Captain and crew departed; the little boy was better, and his hosts, Charity and Jem Ledbury, only wished to keep him for ever; the sensation at Redclyffe was subsiding, when one morning Markham came, in a state of extreme satisfaction and importance, to exhibit the county paper, with a full account of the gallant conduct of the youthful baronet. Two or three days after, on coming home from a ride to Coombe Prior, Guy found Lord Thorndale's card, and heard from Arnaud that 'my lord had made particular inquiries how long he would be in the country, and had been to the cliff to see where the wreck was.'

Markham likewise attached great importance to this visit, and went off into a long story about his influence and the representation of Moorworth, or even of the county. As soon as Guy knew what he was talking about, he exclaimed, 'Oh, I hope all that is not coming on me yet! Till I can manage Todd and Coombe Prior, I am sure I am not fit to manage the country!'

A few mornings after, he found on the table an envelope, which he studied, as if playing with his eagerness. It had an East-hill post-mark, and a general air of Hollywell writing, but it was not in the hand of either of the gentlemen, nor was the tail of the *y* such as Mrs. Edmonstone was wont to make. It had even a resemblance to Amabel's own writing, that startled him. He opened it at last, and within found the hand he could not doubt—Charles's, namely—much more crooked than usual, and the words shortened and blotted:—

‘DEAR G.,—I ought not to do this, but I must; I have tyrannized over Charlotte, and obtained the where-withal. Write me a full account of your gallant conduct. I saw it first in A.’s face. It has done you great good with my father. I will write more when I can. I can’t get on now.

‘C. M. E.’

He might well say he had first seen it in his sister’s face. She had brought him the paper, and was looking for something he wanted her to read to him, when ‘Redclyffe Bay’ met her eye, and then came the whole at one delightful glance. He saw the heightened colour, the exquisite smile, the tear-drop on the eyelash.

‘Amy! what have you there?’

She pointed to the place, gave the paper into his hand, and burst into tears, the gush of triumphant feeling. Not one was shed because she was divided from the hero of the shipwreck; they were pure unselfish tears of joy, exultation, and thankfulness. Charles read the history, and she listened in silence; then looked it over again with him, and betrayed how thoroughly she had been taught the whole geography of Redclyffe Bay. The next person who came in was Charlotte; and as soon as she understood what occupied them, she went into an ecstasy, and flew away with the paper, rushing with it straight into her father’s room, where she broke into the middle of his letter-writing, by reading it in a voice of triumph.

Mr. Edmonstone was delighted. He was just the person who would be far more taken with an exploit of this kind, such as would make a figure in the world, than by steady perseverance in well-doing, and his heart was won directly. His wrath at the hasty words had long been diminishing, and now was absolutely lost in his admiration. ‘Fine fellow! noble fellow!’ he said. ‘He is the bravest boy I ever heard of; but I knew what was in him from the first. I wish from my

heart there was not this cloud over him. I am sure the whole story has not a word of truth in it, but he wont say a word to clear himself, or else we would have him here again to-morrow.'

This was the first time Mr. Edmonstone had expressed anything of real desire to recall Guy, and it was what Charles meant in his letter.

The tyranny over Charlotte was exercised while the rest were at dinner, and they were alone together. They talked over the adventure for the tenth time that day, and Charles grew so excited that he vowed that he must at once write to Guy; ordered her to give him the materials, and when she hesitated, forced her into it, by declaring that he should get up and reach the things himself, which would be a great deal worse. She wanted to write from his dictation, but he would not consent, thinking that his mother might not consider it proper, and he began vigorously; but though long used to writing in a recumbent posture, he found himself less capable now than he had expected, and went on soliloquizing thus: 'What a pen you've given me, Charlotte. There goes a blot! Here, another dip, will you! and take up that with the blotting paper before it becomes more like a spider.'

'Wont you make a fresh beginning?'

'No, that has cost me too much already. I've got no more command over my fingers. Here we go into the further corner of the paper. Well! C. M. E. There 'tis—do it up, will you? If he can read it he'll be lucky. How my arms ache!'

'I hope it has not hurt you, Charlie; but I am sure he will be very glad of it. Oh! I am glad you said that about Amy.'

'Who told you to read it, Puss?'

'I could not help it, 'tis so large.'

'I believe I *didn't ought to* have said it. Don't tell her I did,' said Charles; 'but I couldn't for the life of me—or what is more to the purpose, for the trouble of

it—help putting it. He is too true a knight not to hear that his lady, not exactly smiled, but cried.'

'He is a true knight,' said Charlotte, emphatically, as with her best pen, and with infinite satisfaction, she indited the 'Sir Guy Morville, Bart., Redclyffe Park, Moorworth,' only wishing she could lengthen out the words infinitely.

'Do you remember, Charlie, how we sat here the first evening he came, and you took me in about the deadly feud?'

'It was no take-in,' said Charles; 'only the feud is all on one side.'

'Oh, dear! it has been such a stupid winter without Guy,' sighed Charlotte; 'if this wont make papa forgive him, I don't know what will.'

'I wish it would, with all my heart,' said Charles; 'but logically, if you understand the word, Charlotte, it does not make much difference to the accusation. It would not exactly be received as exculpatory evidence in a court of justice.'

'You don't believe the horrid stories?'

'I believe that Guy has gamed quite as much as I have myself; but I want to see him cleared beyond the power of Philip to gainsay or disbelieve it. I should like to have such a force of proof as would annihilate Philip; and if I was anything but what I am, I would have it. If you could but lend me a leg for two days, Charlotte.'

'I wish I could.'

'One thing shall be done,' proceeded Charles; 'my father shall go and meet him in person when he comes of age. Now Don Philip is out of the way I trust I can bring that about.'

'If he would but come here!'

'No, that must not be, as mamma says, till there is some explanation; but if I was but in my usual state, I would go with papa and meet him in London. I wonder if there is any chance of it. The 28th of March

—ten weeks off! If I can but get hold of those trusty crutches of mine by that time I'll do, and I'll do, and I'll do. We would bring back Amy's knight with flying colours.'

'Oh, how happy we should be!'

'If I only knew what sort of sense that Markham of his may have, I would give him a hint, and set him to ferret out at St. Mildred's. Or shall I get Dr. Mayerne to order me there for change of air?'

So schemed Charles; while Guy, on his side, busied himself at Redclyffe as usual; took care and thought for the cabin-boy—returned Lord Thorndale's call without finding him at home—saw the school finished, and opened—and became more intimate with the Ashfords.

He said he should not come home at Easter, as he should be very busy reading for his degree; and as his birthday this year fell in Holy Week, there could be no rejoicings: besides, as he was not to have his property in his own hands till he was five-and-twenty, it would make no difference to the people. The Ashfords agreed they had rather he was safe at home for the vacation, and were somewhat anxious when he spoke of coming home to settle, after he had taken his degree.

For his own part he was glad the season would prevent any rejoicings, for he was in no frame of mind to enter into them, and his birth-day had been so sad a day for his grandfather, that he had no associations of pleasure connected with it.

Markham understood the feeling, liked it, and shared it, only saying that they would have their day of rejoicing when he married. Guy could not answer, and the old steward remarked the look of pain.

'Sir Guy,' said he 'is it that which is wrong with you? Don't be angry with an old man for asking the question, but I only would hope and trust you are not getting into any scrape.'

'Thank you, Markham,' said Guy, after an effort;

‘I cannot tell you about it. I will only set you at rest by saying it is nothing you could think I ought to be ashamed of.’

‘Then why—what has come between? What could man or woman object to in you?’ said Markham, regarding him proudly.

‘These unhappy suspicions,’ said Guy.

‘I can’t make it out,’ said Markham. ‘You must have been doing something foolish to give rise to them.’

Guy told nearly what he had said on the first day of his return, but nothing could be done towards clearing up the mystery, and he returned to Oxford as usual.

March commenced, and Charles, though no longer absolutely recumbent, and able to write letters again, could not yet attempt to use his crutches, so that all his designs vanished, except that of persuading his father to go to London to meet Guy and Markham there, and transact the business consequent on his ward’s attaining his majority. He trusted much to Guy’s personal influence, and said to his father, ‘You know no one has seen him yet but Philip, and he would tell things to you that he might not to him.’

It was an argument that delighted Mr. Edmonstone.

‘Of course I have more weight and experience, and—and poor Guy is very fond of us. Eh, Charlie?’

So Charles wrote to make an appointment for Guy to meet his guardian and Markham in London on Easter Tuesday. ‘If you will clear up the gambling story,’ he wrote, ‘all may yet be well.’

Guy sighed as he laid aside the letter. ‘All in vain, kind Charlie,’ said he to himself, ‘vain as are my attempts to keep my poor uncle from sinking himself further! Is it fair, though,’ continued he, with vehemence, ‘that the happiness of at least one life should be sacrificed to hide one step in the ruin of a man who will not let himself be saved? Is it not a waste of self-

devotion? Have I any right to sacrifice hers? Ought I not rather'—and a flash of joy came over him—'to make my uncle give me back my promise of concealment? I can make it up to him. It cannot injure him, since only the Edmonstones will know it! But'—and he pressed his lips firmly together—'is this the spirit I have been struggling for this whole winter? Did I not see that patient waiting and yielding is fit penance for my violence. It would be ungenerous. I will wait and bear, contented that Heaven knows my innocence at least in this. For her, when at my best I dreaded that my love might bring sorrow on her—how much more now, when I have seen my doom face to face, and when the first step towards her would be what I cannot openly and absolutely declare to be right! That would be the very means of bringing the suffering on her, and I should deserve it.'

Guy quitted these thoughts to write to Markham to make the appointment, finishing his letter with a request that Markham would stop at St. Mildred's on his way to London, and pay Miss Wellwood, the lady with whom his uncle's daughter was placed, for her quarter's board. 'I hope this will not be a very troublesome request,' wrote Guy; 'but I know you had rather I did it in this way, than disobey your maxims, as to not sending money by the post.'

The time before the day of meeting was spent in strengthening himself against the pain it would be to refuse his confidence to Mr. Edmonstone, and thus to throw away the last chance of reconciliation, and of Amy. This would be the bitterest pang of all—to see them ready to receive him, and be forced to reject their kindness.

So passed the preceding week, and with it his twenty-first birthday, spent very differently from the way in which it would ordinarily be passed by a youth in his position. It went by in hard study and sad musings, in bracing himself to a resolution that would

cost him all he held dear, and, as the only means of so bracing himself, in trying to fix his gaze more steadily beyond the earth.

Easter day steadied the gaze once more for him, and as the past week had nerved him in the spirit of self-sacrifice, the feast day brought him true unchanging joy, shining out of sadness, and enlightening the path that would lead him to keep his resolution to the utmost, and endure the want of earthly hope.

CHAPTER III.

Already in thy spirit thus divine,
Whatever weal or woe betide,
Be that high sense of duty still thy guide,
And all good powers will aid a soul like thine.

SOUTHEY.

‘NOW for it!’ thought Guy, as he dismissed his cab, and was shown up stairs in the hotel. ‘Give me the strength to withstand!’

The door was opened, and he beheld Mr. Edmonstone, Markham, and another—it surely was Sebastian Dixon! All sprung up to receive him; and Mr. Edmonstone, seizing him by both hands, exclaimed—

‘Here he is himself! Guy, my boy, my dear boy, you are the most generous fellow in the world! You have been used abominably. I wish my two hands had been cut off before I was persuaded to write that letter; but it is all right now. Forget and forgive—eh, Guy? You’ll come home with me, and we will write this very day for Deloraine.’

Guy was almost giddy with surprise. He held one of Mr. Edmonstone’s hands, and pressed it hard; his other hand he passed over his eyes, as if in a dream. ‘All right?’ he repeated.

‘All right!’ said Mr. Edmonstone. ‘I know where your money went, and I honour you for it; and there stands the man who told me the whole story. I said, from the first, it was a confounded slander. It was all owing to the little girl.’

Guy turned his face in amazement towards his uncle,

who was only waiting to explain. 'Never till this morning had I the least suspicion that I had been the means of bringing you under any imputation. How could you keep me in ignorance?'

'You have told——'

'Of the cheque,' broke in Mr. Edmonstone, 'and of all the rest, and of your providing for the little girl. How could you do it, with that pittance of an allowance of yours? And master Philip saying you never had any money! No wonder indeed!'

'If I had known you were pinching yourself,' said Dixon, 'my mind would have revolted——'

'Let me understand it,' said Guy, grasping the back of a chair. 'Tell me, Markham. Is it really so? Am I cleared? Has Mr. Edmonstone a right to be satisfied?'

'Yes, Sir Guy,' was Markham's direct answer. 'Mr. Dixon has accounted for your disposal of the thirty pound cheque, and there is an end of the matter.'

Guy drew a long breath, and the convulsive grasp of his fingers relaxed.

'I cannot thank you enough!' said he to his uncle; then to Mr. Edmonstone, 'how is Charles?'

'Better—much better; you shall see him to-morrow—eh, Guy?'

'But I cannot explain about the one thousand pounds.'

'Never mind—you never had it, so you can't have misspent it. That's neither here nor there.'

'And you forgive my language respecting you?'

'Nonsense about that! If you never said anything worse than that Philip was a meddling coxcomb, you haven't much to repent of; and I am sure I was ten old fools when I let him bore me into writing that letter.'

'No, no, you did right under your belief; and circumstances were strong against me. And is it clear?—are we where we were before?'

'We are—we are in everything; only we know better what you are worth, Guy. Shake hands once more.'

There's an end of all misunderstanding and vexation, and we shall be all right at home again !'

The shake was a mighty one. Guy shaded his face for a moment or two, and then said—

'It is too much. I don't understand it. How did you know this matter wanted explanation?' said he, turning to his uncle.

'I learnt it from Mr. Markham, and you will do me the justice to believe that I was greatly shocked to find that your generosity——'

'The truth of the matter is this,' said Markham. 'You sent me to Miss Wellwood's, at St. Mildred's. The principal was not within, and while waiting for her to make the payment, I got into conversation with her sister, Miss Jane. She told me that the child, Mr. Dixon's daughter, was always talking of your kindness, especially of a morning at St. Mildred's, when you helped him in some difficulty. I thought this threw some light on the matter, found out Mr. Dixon this morning, and you see the result.'

'I do indeed,' said Guy; 'I wish I could attempt to thank you all.'

'Thanks enough for me to see you look like yourself,' said Markham. 'Did you think I was going to sit still, and leave you in the mess you had got yourself into, with your irregularity about keeping your accounts?'

'And to you,' said Guy, looking at his uncle, as if it was especially pleasant to be obliged to him. 'You never can guess what I owe to you !'

'Nay, I deserve no thanks at all,' said Sebastian, 'since I was the means of bringing the imputation on you; and I am sure it is enough for a wretch like me, not to have brought only misery wherever I turn—to have done something to repair the evil I have caused. Oh, could I but bring back your father to what he was when first I saw him, as you are now !'

He was getting into one of those violent fits of self-reproach, at once genuine and theatrical, of which Guy

had a sort of horror, and it was well Mr. Edmonstone broke in, like comedy into tragedy.

‘Come, what’s past can’t be helped, and I have no end of work to be done, so there’s speechifying enough for once. Mr. Dixon, you must not be going. Sit down and look over the newspaper, while we sign these papers. You must dine with us, and drink your nephew’s health, though it is not his real birth-day.’

Guy was much pleased that Mr. Edmonstone should have given this invitation, as well as with the consideration Markham had shown for Dixon in his narration. Mr. Dixon, who had learnt to consider parents and guardians as foes and tyrants, stammered and looked confused and enraptured ; but it appeared that he could not stay, for he had a professional engagement. He gave them an exhortation to come to the concert where he was employed, and grew so ardent in his description of it, that Guy could have wished to go ; but his companions were in haste to say there was far too much to do. And the next moment Guy told himself, that Mr. Edmonstone’s good-natured face and joyous ‘eh, Guy?’ were more to him than any music he could hear nearer than Hollywell.

He went down stairs with his uncle, who all the way raved about the music, satisfied to find ears that could comprehend, and was too full of it even to attend or respond to the parting thanks, for his last words were something about a magnificent counter tenor.

Guy walked up slowly, trying to gather his thoughts ; but when it came back to him that Amy was his again, his brain seemed to reel with ecstasy, and it would have taken far more time than he could spare to recall his sober senses ; so he opened the door, to convince himself at least of Mr. Edmonstone’s presence, and was received with another shake of the hand.

‘So here you are again. I was afraid he was carrying you off to his concert after all. I believe you have half a mind for it. Do you like to stay in London for the next ? Eh, Guy ?’ and it was good to hear Mr.

Edmonstone's hearty laugh, as he patted his ward on the shoulder, saw his blushing, smiling shake of the head, and gave a knowing look, which let in a fresh light on Markham, and luckily was unseen by Guy.

'Well,' continued Mr. Edmonstone, 'the man is more gentlemanlike than I expected. A good sort of fellow at the bottom, I dare say. He was pretty considerably shocked to find he had brought you into such a scrape.'

'He is very generous,' said Guy. 'Oh, there is much of a noble character in him.'

'Noble? humph!' put in Markham. 'He has gone down-hill fast enough, since I used to see him in your father's time; but I am glad he had the decency not to be the undoing of you.'

'His feeling is his great point,' said Guy, 'when you can once get at it. I wish—— But,' breaking off short, 'I can't make it out. What did little Marianne tell you? Or was it Miss Wellwood?'

'It was first the youngest sister,' said Markham. 'I sat there talking to her some little time; she said you had been very kind to the family, and the child was very grateful to you—was always talking of some morning when you and your dog came, and helped her mother. Her father had been out all night, and her mother was crying, she said, and declaring he would be sent to prison, till you came and helped them.'

'Yes, that's it,' said Guy.

'Well, I remembered what you had told me of the mystery of the draft, and guessed that this might be the clue to it. I begged to see the child, and in she came, the very image of your mother, and a sharp little thing that knew what she meant, but had not much idea of the shame, poor child, about her father. She told me the story of his coming home in the morning, and her mother being in great distress, and saying they were ruined, till you came and talked to her mother, and gave her something. I asked if it was money, and she said it was paper. I showed her a draft, and she

knew it was like that. So then I made her tell me where to find her father, whom I used to know in old times, and had to write to, now and then. I hunted him up, and a creditable figure he was, to be sure; but I got the truth out of him at last, and when he heard you had got into disgrace on his account, he raved like a tragedy hero, and swore he would come and tell your guardian the whole story. I put him into a cab for fear he should repent, and he had just got to the end of it when you came in.'

'It is of no use to thank you again, Markham!'

'Why, I have been getting your family out of scrapes these forty years or thereabouts,' said Markham; 'tis all I'm good for; and if they had been no worse than this one, it would be better for all of us. But time is getting on, and there is enough to do.'

To the accounts they went at once. There was a good deal to be settled; and though Guy had as yet no legal power, according to his grandfather's will, he was of course consulted about everything. He was glad that, since he could not be alone to bring himself to the realization of his newly-recovered happiness, he should have this sobering and engrossing occupation. There he sat, coolly discussing leases and repairs, and only now and then allowing himself a sort of glimpse at the treasury of joy awaiting him whenever he had time to dwell on it. The Coombe Prior matters were set in a better train, the preliminary arrangements about the curacy were made, and Guy had hopes it would be his friend Mr. Wellwood's title for Orders.

There was no time to write to Hollywell, or rather Mr. Edmonstone forgot to do so till it was too late, and then consoled himself by observing that it did not signify if his family were taken by surprise, since joy killed no one.

His family were by no means of opinion that it did not signify when the next morning's post brought them no letter. Mrs. Edmonstone and Charles had hoped much, and Amy did not know how much she had

hoped till the melancholy words 'no letter' passed from one to the other.

To make it worse, by some of those mismanagements of Mr. Edmonstone's which used to run counter to his wife's arrangements, a dinner-party had been fixed for this identical Wednesday, and the prospect was agreeable to no one, especially when the four o'clock train did not bring Mr. Edmonstone, who, therefore, was not to be expected till seven, when all the world would be arrived.

Laura helped Amy to dress, put the flowers in her hair, kissed her, and told her it was a trying day; and Amy sighed wearily, thanked her, and went down with arms twined in hers, whispering, 'If I could help being so foolish as to let myself have a little hope!'

Laura thought the case so hopeless, that she was sorry Amy could not cease from the foolishness, and did not answer. Amy sat down at the foot of the sofa, whither Charles was now carried down every day, and, without venturing to look at him, worked at her netting. A carriage—her colour came and went, but it was only some of the guests; another—the Brownlows. Amy was speaking to Miss Brownlow when she heard more greetings; she looked up, caught by the arm of the sofa, and looked again. Her father was pouring out apologies and welcomes, and her mother was shaking hands with Guy.

Was it a dream? She shut her eyes, then looked again. He was close to her by this time, she felt his fingers close on her white glove for one moment, but she only heard his voice in the earnest 'How are you, Charlie?' Her father came to her, gave her first his usual kiss of greeting, then, not letting her go, looked at her for a moment, and, as if he could not help it, kissed her on both cheeks, and said,—'How d'ye do, my little Amy?' in a voice that meant unutterable things. All the room was swimming round; there was nothing for it but to run away, and she ran, but from

the ante-room she heard the call outside, 'Sir Guy's bag to his room,' and she could not rush out among the servants. At that moment, however, she spied Mary Ross and her father; she darted up to them, said something incoherent about Mary's bonnet, and took her up to her own room.

'Amy, my dear, you look wild. What has come to you?'

'Papa is come home, and——' the rest failed, and Amy was as red as the camellia in her hair.

'And?' repeated Mary; 'and the mystery is explained?'

'Oh! I don't know, they are only just come, and I was so silly, I ran away,—I did not know what to do.'

'*They* are come, are they?' thought Mary. 'My little Amy, I see it all.'

She made the taking off her bonnet and the settling her lace as elaborate an operation as she could, and Amy flitted about as if she did not by any means know what she was doing. A springy, running step was heard on the stairs and in the passage, and Mary, though she could not see her little friend's face, perceived her neck turn red for a moment, after which Amy took her arm, pressed it affectionately, and they went down.

Mrs. Edmonstone was very glad to see Amabel looking tolerably natural. 'Mamma' was of course burning to hear all, but she was so confident that the essentials were safe, that her present care was to see how her two young lovers would be able to comport themselves, and to be on her guard against attending to them more than to her guests.

Amy, after passing by Charles, and getting a squeeze from his ever-sympathizing hand, put herself away behind Mary, while Laura talked to every one, hoping to show that there was some self-possession in the family. Guy reappeared, but, after one glance to see if Amy was present, he did not look at her again, but went and leant over the lower end of Charles's sofa,

just as he used to do ; and Charles lay gazing at him, and entirely forgetting what he had been trying to say just before to Mrs. Brownlow, professing to have come from London that morning, and making the absent mistakes likely to be attributed to the lovers themselves.

Mr. Edmonstone came, and dinner followed. As Mrs. Edmonstone paired off her company, she considered what to do with her new arrival.

‘If you had come two hours ago,’ said she, within herself, ‘I would have let you be at home. Now you must be a great man, and be content with me. It will be better for Amy.’

Accordingly Guy was between her and Mrs. Gresham. She did not try to speak to him, and was amused by his fitful attempts at making conversation with Mrs. Gresham, when it struck him that he ought to be taking notice of her. Amy (very fortunately, in her own opinion) was out of sight of him, on the same side of the table, next to Mr. Ross, who, like his daughter, guessed enough about the state of things to let her alone.

Charles was enjoying all manner of delightful conjectures with Charlotte, till the ladies returned to the drawing-room, and then he said as much as he dared to Mary Ross, far more than she had gained from Laura, who, as they came out of the dining-room, had said,—

‘Don’t ask me any questions, for I know nothing at all about it.’

Amy was talked to by Mrs. Gresham about club-books, and new flowers, to which she was by this time able to attend very well, satisfied that his happiness had returned, and content to wait till the good time for knowing how. She could even be composed when the gentlemen came in, Guy talking to Mr. Ross about Coombe Prior, and then going to Charles ; but presently she saw no more, for a request for music was made, and she was obliged to go and play a duet with

Laura. She did not dislike this, but there followed a persecution for some singing. Laura would have spared her, but could not; and while she was turning over the book to try to find something that was not impossible to begin, and Laura whispering encouragingly, 'This—try this—your part is almost nothing; or can't you do this?' another hand turned over the leaves, as if perfectly at home in them, and, without speaking, as if it was natural for him to spare Amy, found a song which they had often sung together, where she might join as much or as little as she chose, under cover of his voice. She had not a thought or sensation beyond the joy of hearing it again, and she stood motionless, as if in a trance. When it was over, he said to Laura, 'I beg your pardon for making such bad work. I am so much out of practice.'

Mrs. Brownlow was seen advancing on them; Amy retreated, leaving Guy and Laura to fulfil all that was required of them, which they did with a very good grace, and Laura's old familiar feeling began to revive, so much that she whispered while he was finding the place, 'Don't you dislike all this excessively?'

'It does as well as anything else, thank you,' was the answer. 'I can do it better than talking.'

At last they were released, and the world was going away. Mary could not help whispering to Mrs. Edmonstone, 'How glad you must be to get rid of us!' and, as Mrs. Edmonstone answered with a smile, she ventured further to say,—'How beautifully Amy has behaved!'

Little Amy, as soon as she had heard the last carriage roll off, wished every one good night, shook hands with Guy, holding up the lighted candle between him and her face as a veil, and ran away to her own room. The others remained in a sort of embarrassed silence, Mr. Edmonstone rubbing his hands; Laura lighted the candles, Charlotte asked after Bustle, and was answered that he was at Oxford, and Charles, laying hold of the

side of the sofa, pulled himself by it into a sitting posture.

‘Shall I help you?’ said Guy.

‘Thank you, but I am not ready yet; besides, I am an actual log now, and am carried as such, so it is of no use to wait for me. Mamma shall have the first turn, and I won’t even leave my door open.’

‘Yes, yes, yes; go and have it out with mamma, next best to Amy herself, as she is run away—eh, Guy?’ said Mr. Edmonstone.

Guy and Mrs. Edmonstone had not hitherto trusted themselves to speak to each other, but they looked and smiled, then, wishing the rest good night, they disappeared. Then there was a simultaneous outbreak of ‘Well?’

‘All right!’ said Mr. Edmonstone. ‘Every word was untrue. He is the noblest fellow in the world, as I knew all the time, and I was an old fool for listening to a pack of stories against him.’

‘Hurrah!’ cried Charles, drumming on the back of his sofa. ‘Let us hear how the truth came out, and what it was.’

‘It was that Dixon. There has he been helping that man for ever, sending his child to school, giving him sums upon sums, paying his gaming debts with that cheque!’

‘Oh, oh!’ cried Charles.

‘Yes, that was it! The child told Markham of it, and Markham brought the father to tell me. It puts me in a rage to think of the monstrous stories Philip has made me believe!’

‘I was sure of it!’ cried Charles. ‘I knew it would come out that he had only been so much better than other people that nobody could believe it. Cleared! cleared! Why, Charlotte, Mr. Ready-to-halt will be for footing it cleverly enough!’ as she was wildly curvetting round him.

‘I was always sure,’ said Mr. Edmonstone. ‘I

knew it was not in him to go wrong. It was only Philip, who would persuade me black was white.'

'I never believed one word of it,' said Charles; 'still less after I saw Philip's animosity.'

'*Les absens ont toujours tort*,' interrupted Laura; then, afraid of saying too much, she added,—'Come, Charlotte, it is very late.'

'And I shall be the first to tell Amy!' cried Charlotte. 'Good night, papa!—good night, Charlie!'

She rushed up stairs, afraid of being forestalled. Laura lingered, putting some books away in the ante-room, trying to overcome the weary pain at her heart. She did not know how to be confident. Her father's judgment was worthless in her eyes, and Philip had predicted that Amy would be sacrificed after all. To see them happy made her sigh at the distance of her own hopes, and worse than all was self-reproach for unkindness in not rejoicing with the rest, in spite of her real affection for Guy himself. When she thought of him, she could not believe him guilty; when she thought of Philip's belief, she could not suppose him innocent, and she pitied her sister for enjoying a delusive happiness. With effort, however, she went to her room, and, finding her a little overpowered by Charlotte's tumultuous joy, saw that peace and solitude were best for her till she could have more certain intelligence, and, after very tender good-nights, carried off Charlotte.

It would be hard to describe Mrs. Edmonstone's emotion as she preceded Guy to the dressing-room, and sat down, looking up to him as he stood in his old place by the fire. She thought he did not look well, though it might be only that the sun-burnt colour had given place to his natural fairness; his eyes, though bright as ever, did not dance and sparkle; a graver expression sat on his brow; and although he still looked very young, a change there certainly was, which made him man instead of boy—a look of having suffered, and

conquered suffering. She felt even more motherly affection for him now than when he last stood there in the full tide of his first outburst of his love for her daughter, and her heart was almost too full for speech; but he seemed to be waiting for her, and at last she said,—‘I am very glad to have you here again.’

He smiled a little, then said, ‘May I tell you all about it?’

‘Sit down here. I want very much to hear it. I am sure you have gone through a good deal.’

‘I have indeed,’ said he, simply and gravely; and there was a silence, while she was certain that, whatever he might have endured, he did not feel it to have been in vain.

‘But it is at an end,’ said she. ‘I have scarcely seen Mr. Edmonstone, but he tells me he is perfectly satisfied.’

‘He is so kind as to be satisfied, though you know I still cannot explain about the large sum I asked him for.’

‘We will trust you,’ said Mrs. Edmonstone, smiling; ‘but I am very anxious to hear how you came to an understanding.’

Guy went over the story in detail, and very much affected she was to hear how entirely unfounded had been the suspicion, and how thankful he was for Mr. Edmonstone’s forgiveness.’

‘You had rather to forgive us!’ said she.

‘You forget how ill I behaved,’ said Guy, colouring. ‘If you knew the madness of those first moments of provocation, you would think that the penance of a lifetime, instead of only one winter, would scarce have been sufficient.’

‘You would not say, as Charles does, that the suspicion justified your anger?’

‘No, indeed!’ He paused and spoke again. ‘Thank Heaven, it did not last long; but the insight it gave me into the unsubdued evil about me was a fearful thing.’

‘But you conquered it. They were the unguarded exclamations of the first shock. Your whole conduct since, especially the interview with Philip, has shown that your anger has not been abiding, and that you have learnt to subdue it.’

‘It could not abide, for there was no just cause of offence. Of course such a dreadful outburst warned me to be on my guard; and you know the very sight of Philip is a warning that there is danger in that way! I mean,’ said Guy, becoming conscious that he had been very severe, ‘I mean that I know of old that I am apt to be worried by his manner, and that ought to make me doubly cautious.’

Mrs. Edmonstone was struck by the soberer manner in which he spoke of his faults. He was as ready to take full blame, but without the vehemence which he used to expend in raving at himself instead of at the offender. It seemed as if he had brought himself to the tone he used to desire so earnestly.

‘I am very glad to be able to explain all to Philip,’ he said. ‘I will write as soon as possible. Oh, Mrs. Edmonstone! if you knew what it is to be brought back to such un hoped-for happiness, to sit here once more, with you,’—his voice trembled, and the tears were in her eyes,—‘to have seen *her*, to have all overlooked, and return to all I hoped last year. I want to look at you all, to believe that it is true,’ he finished, smiling.

‘You both behaved very well this evening,’ said she, laughing, because she could do so better than anything else at that moment.

‘You both!’ murmured Guy to himself.

‘Ah! little Amy has been very good this winter.’

He answered her with a beautiful expression of his eyes, was silent a little while, and suddenly exclaimed, in a candid, expostulating tone, ‘But now, seriously, don’t you think it a very bad thing for her?’

‘My dear Guy,’ said she, scarcely repressing a disposition to laugh, ‘I told you last summer what I thought of it, and you must settle the rest with Amy

to-morrow. I hear the drawing-room bell, which is a sign I must send you to bed. Good night!

‘Good night!’ repeated Guy, as he held her hand. ‘It is so long since I have had any one to wish me good night! Good night, mamma!’

She pressed his hand, then as he ran down to lend a helping hand in carrying Charles, she, the tears in her eyes, crossed the passage to see how it was with her little Amy, and to set her at rest for the night.

Amy’s candle was out, and she was in bed, lying full in the light of the Easter moon, which poured in glorious whiteness through her window. She started up as the door opened. ‘Oh, mamma! how kind of you to come!’

‘I can only stay a moment, my dear; your papa is coming up; but I must just tell you that I have been having such a nice talk with dear Guy. He has behaved beautifully, and papa is quite satisfied. Now, darling, I hope you will not lie awake all night, or you won’t be fit to talk to him to-morrow.’

Amy sat up in bed, and put her arms round her mother’s neck. ‘Then he is happy again,’ she whispered. ‘I should like to hear all.’

‘He shall tell you himself to-morrow, my dear. Now, good night! you have been a very good child. Now, go to sleep, my dear one.’

Amy lay down obediently. ‘Thank you for coming to tell me, dear mamma,’ she said. ‘I am very glad; good night!’

She shut her eyes, and there was something in the sweet, obedient, placid look of her face, as the white moonlight shone upon it, that made her mother pause and gaze again with the feeling, only tenderer, left by a beautiful poem. Amy looked up to see why she delayed; she gave her another kiss, and left her in the moonlight.

Little Amy’s instinct was to believe the best, and do as she was bidden, and there was a ‘quietness and confidence in the tone of her mind which gave a sort of

serenity of its own even to suspense. A thankful, happy sensation that all was well, mamma said so ; and Guy was there, had taken possession of her, and she did not agitate herself to know how or why, for mamma had told her to put herself to sleep ; so she thought of all the most thanksgiving verses of her store of poetry, and before the moon had passed away from her window, Amabel Edmonstone was wrapped in a sleep dreamless and tranquil as an infant's.

CHAPTER IV.

Hence bashful cunning,
And prompt me, plain and holy innocence.
I am your wife if you will marry me.

TEMPEST.

A MABEL awoke to such a sense of relief and repose that she scarcely liked to ask herself the cause, lest it might ruffle her complete peace. Those words 'all right,' seemed to be enough to assure her that the cloud was gone.

Her mother came in, told her one or two of the main facts, and took her down under her wing, only stopping by the way for a greeting to Charles, who could not rise till after breakfast. He held her fast, and gazed up in her face, but she coloured so deeply, cast down her eyes, and looked so meek and submissive, that he let her go, and said nothing.

The breakfast party were for the most part quiet, silent, and happy. Even Charlotte was hushed by the subdued feeling of the rest, and Mr. Edmonstone's hilarity, though replied to in turn by each, failed to wake them into mirth. Guy ran up and down stairs continually, to wait upon Charles; and thus the conversation was always interrupted as fast as it began, so that the only fact that came out was the cause of the lateness of their arrival yesterday. Mr. Edmonstone had taken it for granted that Guy, like Philip, would watch for the right time, and warn him; while Guy, being excessively impatient, had been so much afraid of

letting himself fidget, as to have suffered the right moment to pass, and then borne all the blame.

‘How you must have wanted to play the Harmonious Blacksmith,’ said Charlotte.

‘I caught myself going through the motions twice,’ said Guy.

Mrs. Edmonstone said to herself that he might contest the palm of temper with Amy even; the difference being, that hers was naturally sweet, his a hasty one, so governed that the result was the same.

When breakfast was over, as they were rising, Guy made two steps towards Amabel, at whom he had hitherto scarcely looked, and said very low, in his straightforward way, ‘Can I speak to you a little while?’

Amy’s face glowed as she moved towards him, and her mother said something about the drawing-room, where the next moment she found herself. She did not use any little restless arts to play with her embarrassment; she did not torment the flowers or the chimney ornaments, nor even her own rings; she stood with her hands folded and her head a little bent down, like a pendant blossom, ready to listen to whatever might be said to her.

He did not speak at first, but moved uneasily about. At last he came nearer, and began speaking fast and nervously.

‘Amabel, I want you to consider—you really ought to think whether this is not a very bad thing for you.’

The drooping head was raised, the downcast lids lifted up, and the blue eyes fixed on him with a look at once confiding and wondering. He proceeded—

‘I have brought you nothing but unhappiness already. So far as you have taken any interest in me, it could cause you only pain, and the more I think of it, the more unfit it seems that one so formed for light, and joy, and innocent mirth should have anything to do with the darkness that is round me. Think well

of it. I feel as if I had done a selfish thing by you, and now, you know, you are not bound. You are quite free! No one knows anything about it; or if they did, the blame would rest entirely with me. I would take care it should. So Amy, think, and think well, before you risk your happiness.'

'As to that,' replied Amy, in a soft low voice, with *such* a look of truth in her clear eyes, 'I must care for whatever happens to you, and I had rather it was with you, than without you,' she said, casting them down again.

'My Amy!—my own!—my Verena!'—and he held fast one of her hands, as they sat together on the sofa—'I had a feeling, that so it might be through the very worst, yet I can hardly believe it now.'

'Guy,' said Amy, looking up with the gentle resolution that had lately grown on her, 'you must not take me for more than I am worth, and I should like to tell you fairly. I did not speak last time, because it was all so strange and so delightful, and I had not time to think, because I was so confused. But that is a long time ago, and this has been a very sad winter, and I have thought a great deal. I know, and you know, too, that I am a foolish little thing; I have been silly little Amy always; you and Charlie have helped me to all the sense I have, and I don't think I could ever be a clever, strong-minded woman, such as one admires.'

'Heaven forbid!' ejaculated Guy; moved, perhaps, by a certain remembrance of St. Mildred's.

'But,' continued Amy, 'I believe I do really wish to be good, and I know you have helped me to wish it much more, and I have been trying to learn to bear things, and so'—out came something, very like a sunny smile, though some tears followed—'so if you do like such a silly little thing, it can't be helped, and we will try to make the best of her. Only don't say any more about my being happier without you; for one thing I am very sure of, Guy, I had rather bear anything with

you, than know you were bearing it alone. I am only afraid of being foolish and weak, and making things worse for you.'

'So much worse! But still,' he added, 'speak as you may, my Amy, I cannot, must not, feel that I have a right to think of you as my own, till you have heard all. You ought to know what my temper is before you risk yourself in its power. Amy, my first thought towards Philip was nothing short of murder.'

She raised her eyes, and saw how far entirely he meant what he said.

'The first—not the second,' she murmured.

'Yes, the second—the third. There was a moment when I could have given my soul for my revenge!'

'Only a moment!'

'Only a moment, thank heaven! and I have not done quite so badly since. I hope I have not suffered quite in vain; but if that shock could overthrow all my wonted guards, it might, though I pray heaven it may not, it might happen again.'

'I think you conquered yourself then, and that you will again,' said Amy.

'And suppose I was ever to be mad enough to be angry with you?'

Amy smiled outright here. 'Of course, I should deserve it; but I think the trouble would be the comforting you afterwards. Mamma said'—she added, after a long silence, during which Guy's feeling would not let him speak—'mamma said, and I think, that you are much safer and better with such a quick temper as yours, because you are always struggling and fighting with it, on the real true religious ground, than a person more even tempered by nature, but not so much in earnest in doing right.'

'Yes, if I did not believe myself to be in earnest about that, I could never dare to speak to you at all.'

'We will help each other,' said Amy; 'you have always helped me, long before we knew we cared for each other!'

‘And, Amy, if you knew how the thought of you helped me last winter, even when I thought I had forfeited you for ever.’

Their talk only ceased when, at one o’clock, Mrs. Edmonstone, who had pronounced in the dressing-room that three hours was enough for them at once, came in, and asked Guy to go and help to carry Charles down stairs.

He went, and Amy nestled up to her mother, raising her face to be kissed.

‘It is very nice,’ she whispered; and then arranged her brother’s sofa, as she heard his progress down stairs beginning. He was so light and thin as to be very easily carried, and was brought in between Guy and one of the servants. When he was settled on the sofa, he began thus,—‘There was a grand opportunity lost last winter. I was continually rehearsing the scene, and thinking what waste it was to go through such a variety of torture without the dignity of danger. If I could but have got up ever so small an alarm, I would have conjured my father to send for Guy, entreated pathetically that the reconciliation might be effected, and have drawn my last breath clasping their hands, thus! The curtain falls!’

He made a feint of joining their hands, put his head back, and shut his eyes with an air and a grace that put Charlotte into an ecstasy, and made even Amy laugh, as she quitted the room, blushing.

‘But if it had been your last breath,’ said Charlotte, ‘you would not have been much the wiser.’

‘I would have come to life again in time to enjoy the *coup de théâtre*. I had some thoughts of trying an overdose of opium; but I thought Dr. Mayerne would have found me out. I tell you, because it is fair I should have the credit; for, Guy, if you knew what she was to me all the winter, you would perceive my superhuman generosity in not receiving you as my greatest enemy.’

‘I shall soon cease to be surprised at any super-

human generosity,' said Guy. 'But how thin you are, Charlie; you are a very feather to carry; I had no notion it had been such a severe business.'

'Most uncommon!' said Charles, shaking his head, with a mock solemnity.

'It was the worst of all,' said Mrs. Edmonstone; 'six weeks of constant pain.'

'How very sorry Philip must have been!' exclaimed Guy.

'Philip?' said Charlotte.

'Why, was it not owing to him? Surely your father told me so? Did not he let you fall on the stairs?'

'My dear father!' exclaimed Charles, laughing; 'every disaster that happens for the next twelvemonth will be imputed to Philip.'

'How was it, then?' said Guy.

'The fact was this,' said Charles; 'it was in the thick of the persecution of you, and I was obliged to let Philip drag me up stairs, because I was in a hurry. He took the opportunity of giving me some impertinent advice, which I could not stand. I let go his arm, forgetting what a dependent mortal I am, and down I should assuredly have gone, if he had not caught me, and carried me off, as a fox does a goose. So it was his fault, as one may say, in a moral, though not in a physical, sense.'

'Then,' said his mother, 'you do think your illness was owing to that accident?'

'I suppose the damage was brewing, and that the shake brought it into an active state. There's a medical opinion for you!'

'Well, I never knew what you thought of it before,' said Mrs. Edmonstone.

'Why, when I had a condor to pick on Guy's account with Philip, I was not going to pick a crow on my own,' said Charles. 'Oh! is luncheon ready; and you all going? I never see anybody now. I want the story of the shipwreck, though, of course, Ben What's-his-name was the hero, and Sir Guy Morville not a bit of it.'

Laura wanted to walk to East-hill, and the other young people agreed to go thither too.

‘It will be nice to go to church there to-day,’ said Amy, in a half whisper, heard only by Guy, and answered by a look that showed how well he understood and sympathized.

‘Another thing,’ said Amy, colouring a good deal; ‘shall you mind my telling Mary? I behaved so oddly last night, and she was so kind to me, that I think I ought.’

Mary had seen enough last night to be very curious to-day, though hardly expecting her curiosity to be gratified. However, as she was putting on her bonnet for church, she looked out of her window, and saw the four coming across the fields from Hollywell. Guy and Amy did not walk into the village arm-in-arm; but, as they came under the church porch, Guy, unseen by all, held out his hand, sought hers, and, for one moment, pressed it fervently. Amy knew he felt this like their betrothal.

After the service, they stood talking with Mr. Ross and Mary for some little time. Amy held apart, and Mary saw how it was. As they were about to turn homewards, Amy said quickly, ‘Come and walk a little way home with me.’

She went on with Mary before the rest; and when out of sight of them all, said, ‘Mary!’ and then stopped short.

‘I guess something, Amy,’ said Mary.

‘Don’t tell any one but Mr. Ross.’

‘Then I have guessed right. My dear little Amy, I am very glad! So that was the reason you flew out of the room last evening, and looked so bright and glowing!’

‘It was so good of you to ask no questions!’

‘I don’t think I need ask any now, Amy; for I see in your face how right and happy it all is.’

‘I can’t tell you all, Mary, but I must one thing, that the whole terrible story arose from his helping a person in distress. I like you to know that.’

'Papa was always sure that he had not been to blame,' said Mary.

'Yes; so Charlie told me, and that is the reason I wanted you to know.'

'Then, Amy, something of this had begun last summer?'

'Yes; but not as it is now. I did not half know what it was then.'

'Poor dear little Amy,' said Mary, 'what a very sad winter it must have been for you!'

'Oh very!' said Amy; 'but it was worse for him, because he was quite alone; and here every one was so kind to me. Mamma and Laura, and poor Charlie, through all his illness and pain, he was so very kind. And do you know, Mary, now it is all over, I am very glad of this dismal time: for I think that it has taught me how to bear things better.'

She looked very happy. Yet it struck Mary that it was strange to hear that the first thought of a newly-betrothed maiden was how to brace herself in endurance. She wondered, however, whether it was not a more truly happy and safe frame than that of most girls, looking forward to a life of unclouded happiness, such as could never be realized. At least, so it struck Mary, though she owned to herself that her experience of lovers was limited.

Mary walked with Amy almost to the borders of Hollywell-garden; and when the rest came up with them, though no word passed, there was a great deal of congratulation in her warm shake of Guy's hand, and no lack of reply in his proud smile and reddening cheek. Charlotte could not help turning and going back with her a little way, to say, 'Are not you delighted, Mary? Is not Amy the dearest thing in the world? And you don't know, for it is a secret, and I know it, how very noble Guy has been, while they would suspect him.'

'I am very, very glad, indeed! It is everything delightful!'

‘I never was so happy in my life,’ said Charlotte; ‘nor Charlie, either. Only think of having Guy for our brother; and he is going to send for Bustle to-morrow.’

Mary laughed, and parted with Charlotte, speculating on the cause of Laura’s graver looks. Were they caused by the fear of losing her sister, or by a want of confidence in Guy?

That evening, how happy was the party at Hollywell, when Charles put Guy through a cross-examination on the shipwreck, from the first puff of wind to the last drop of rain; and Guy submitted very patiently, since he was allowed the solace of praising his Redclyffe fishermen.

Indeed, this time was full of tranquil, serene happiness. It was like the lovely weather only to be met with in the spring, and then but rarely, when the sky is cloudless, and intensely blue,—the sunshine one glow of clearness without burning,—not a breath of wind checks the silent growth of the expanding buds of light exquisite green. Such days as these shone on Guy and Amabel, looking little to the future, or if they did so at all, with a grave, peaceful awe, reposing in the present, and resuming old habits,—singing, reading, gardening, walking as of old, and that intercourse with each other that was so much more than ever before.

It was more, but it was not quite the same; for Guy was a very chivalrous lover; the polish and courtesy that sat so well on his frank, truthful manners were even more remarkable in his courtship. His ways with Amy had less of easy familiarity than in the time of their brother-and-sister-like intimacy, so that a stranger might have imagined her wooed, not won. It was as if he hardly dared to believe that she could really be his own, and treated her with a sort of reverential love and gentleness, while she looked up to him with ever-increasing honour. She was better able to understand him now than in her more childish days last

summer; and she did not merely see as before, that she was looking at the upper surface of a mystery. He had, at the same time, grown in character; his excitability and over-sensitiveness seemed to have been smoothed away, and to have given place to a calmness of tone, which was by no means impassibility.

When alone with Amy, he was generally very grave, often silent and meditative, or else their talk was deep and serious; and even with the family, he was less merry and more thoughtful than of old, though very bright and animated, and showing full, free affection to them all, as entirely accepted and owned as one of them.

So, indeed, he was. Mr. Edmonstone, with his intense delight in lovers, patronized them, and made common-place jokes, which they soon learnt to bear without much discomposure. Mrs. Edmonstone was all that her constant appellation of 'mamma' betokened, delighting in Guy's having learnt to call her so. Charles enjoyed the restoration of his friend, the sight of Amy's happiness, and the victory over Philip, and was growing better every day. Charlotte was supremely happy, watching the first love affair ever conducted in her sight, and little less so in the return of Bustle, who resumed his old habits as regularly as if he had only left Hollywell yesterday.

Laura alone was unhappy. She did not understand her own feelings; but sad at heart she was, with only one who could sympathize with her, and he far away, and the current of feeling setting against him. She could not conceal her depression, and was obliged to allow it to be attributed to the grief that one sister must feel in parting with another; and as her compassion for her little Amy, coupled with her dread of her latent jealousy, made her particularly tender and affectionate, it gave even more probability to the supposition. This made Guy, who felt as if he was committing a robbery on them all, particularly kind to her, as if he

wished to atone for the injury of taking away her sister ; and his kindness gave her additional pain at entertaining such hard thoughts of him.

How false she felt when she was pitied ! and how she hated the congratulations, of which she had the full share ! She thought, however, that she should be able to rejoice when she had heard Philip's opinion ; and how delightful it would be for him to declare himself satisfied with Guy's exculpation.

CHAPTER V.

I forgave thee all the blame,
I could not forgive the praise.

TENNYSON.

‘IF ever there was a meddlesome coxcomb on this earth!’

Such was the exclamation that greeted the ears of Guy as he supported Charles into the breakfast-room; and, at the same time, Mr. Edmonstone tossed a letter into Guy’s plate, saying,—‘There’s something for you to read.’

Guy began; his lips were tightly pressed together; his brows made one black line across his forehead, and his eye sparkled, even through his bent down eyelashes; but this lasted only a few moments; the forehead smoothed again, and there was a kind of deliberate restraint and force upon himself, which had so much power that no one spoke till he had finished, folded it up with a sort of extra care, and returned it, only saying,—‘You should not show one such letters, Mr. Edmonstone.’

‘Does not it beat everything?’ cried Mr. Edmonstone. ‘If that is not impertinence I should like to know what is! But he has played my Lord Paramount rather too long, as I can tell him! I ask his consent, forsooth! Probation, indeed! You might marry her to-morrow, and welcome. There, give it to mamma. See if she does not say the same. Mere spite and malice all along.’

Poor Laura! would no one refute such cruel injustice? Yes; Guy spoke, eagerly,—‘No, no; that it never was. He was quite right under his belief.’

‘Don’t tell me! Not a word in his favour will I hear!’ stormed on Mr. Edmonstone. ‘Mere envy and ill will.’

‘I always told him so,’ said Charles. ‘Pure malignity!’

‘Nonsense, Charlie!’ said Guy, sharply; ‘there is no such thing about him.’

‘Come, Guy, I can’t stand this,’ said Mr. Edmonstone. ‘I won’t have him defended; I never thought to be so deceived; but you all worshipped the boy as if every word that came out of his mouth was Gospel truth, and you’ve set him up till he would not condescend to take an advice of his own father, who little thought what an upstart sprig he was rearing; but I tell him he has come to the wrong shop for domineering—eh, mamma?’

‘Well!’ cried Mrs. Edmonstone, who had read till near the end with tolerable equanimity; ‘this really is too bad!’

Mamma and all! thought poor Laura, while her mother continued,—‘It is wilful prejudice, to say the least,—I never could have believed him capable of it!’

Charles next had the letter, and was commenting on it in a style of mingled sarcasm and fury, while Laura longed to see it justify itself, as she was sure it would.

‘Read it, all of you—every bit,’ said Mr. Edmonstone, ‘that you may see this paragon of yours!’

‘I had rather not,’ said Amy, shrinking as it came towards her.

‘I should like you to do so, if you don’t dislike it very much,’ said Guy.

She read in silence; and then came the turn of Laura, who marvelled at the general injustice as she read.

CORK, April 8th.

MY DEAR UNCLE,—I am much obliged to you for the communication of your intention with regard to Amabel, but, indeed, I must say I am a good deal surprised that you should have so hastily resolved on so important a step, and have been satisfied with so incomplete an explanation of circumstances which appeared to you, as well as to myself, to show that Guy's character was yet quite unsettled, and his conduct such as to create considerable apprehension that he was habitually extremely imprudent, to say the least of it, in the management of his own affairs. How much more unfit, therefore, to have the happiness of another intrusted to him? I believe, indeed, I understood you to have declared to me that you were resolved never to allow the engagement to be renewed, unless he should, with the deference which is only due to you as his guardian, consent to clear up the mystery with which he has thought fit to invest all his pecuniary transactions; and this, it appears, he refuses, as he persists in denying all explanation of his demand for that large sum of money. As to the cheque, which certainly was applied to discreditable uses, though I will not suffer myself to suppose that Guy was in collusion with his uncle, yet it is not at all improbable that Dixon, not being a very scrupulous person, may, on hearing of the difficulties in which his nephew has been placed, come forward to relieve him from his embarrassment, in the hope of further profit, by thus establishing a claim on his gratitude. In fact, this proof of secretly renewed intercourse with Dixon rather tends to increase the presumption that there is something wrong. I am not writing this in the expectation that the connexion should be entirely broken off, for that, indeed, would be out of the question as things stand at present, but for my little cousin's sake, as well as his own, I entreat of you to pause. They are both extremely young, so young, that if there was no other ground, many persons would think it advisable to wait a few years; and why

not wait until the time fixed by his grandfather for his coming into possession of his property? If the character of his attachment to Amabel is firm and true, the probation may be of infinite service to him, as keeping before him, during the most critical period of his life, a powerful motive for restraining the natural impetuosity of his disposition; while, on the other hand, if this should prove to have been a mere passing fancy for the first young lady into whose society he has been thrown on terms of easy familiar intercourse, you will then have the satisfaction of reflecting that your care and caution have preserved your daughter from a life of misery. My opinion has never altered respecting him, that he is brave and generous, with good feelings and impulses, manners peculiarly attractive, and altogether a character calculated to inspire affection, but impetuous and unsteady, easily led into temptation, yet obstinate in reserve, and his temper of unchecked violence. I wish him happiness of every kind; and, as you well know, would do my utmost for his welfare; but my affection for your whole family, and my own conscientious conviction, make me feel it my duty to offer this remonstrance, which I hope will be regarded as by no means the result of any ill-will, but simply of a sincere desire for the good of all parties, such as can only be evinced by plain speaking.—Yours affectionately,

P. MORVILLE.

All the time Laura was reading, Guy was defending Philip against the exaggerated abuse that Mr. Edmonstone and Charles were pouring out, till at last Mrs. Edmonstone, getting out of patience, said,—‘My dear Guy, if we did not know you so well, we should almost accuse you of affectation.’

‘Then I shall go away,’ said Guy, laughing, as he rose. ‘Can you come out with me?’ said he, in a lower tone, leaning over the back of Amy’s chair.

‘No; wait a bit,’ interposed Mr. Edmonstone; ‘don’t take her out, or you won’t be to be found anywhere,

and I want to speak to you before I write my letter, and go to the Union Meeting. I want to tell Master Philip, on the spot, that the day is fixed, and we snap our fingers at him and his probation. Wait till twenty-five! I daresay!’

At ‘I want to speak to you,’ the ladies had made the first move towards departure, but they were not out of hearing at the conclusion. Guy looked after Amy, but she would not look round, and Charles lay twisting Bustle’s curls round his fingers, and smiling to himself at the manner in which the letter was working by contraries. The overthrow of Philip’s influence was a great triumph for him, apart from the way in which it affected his friend and his sister.

Mr. Edmonstone was disappointed that Guy would not set about fixing the day, in time for him to announce it in a letter to be written in the course of an hour. Guy said, he had not begun on the subject with Amy, and it would never do to hurry her. Indeed, it was a new light to himself that Mr. Edmonstone would like it to take place so soon.

‘Pray when did you think it was to be?’ said Mr. Edmonstone. Upon my word, I never in all my days saw a lover like you, Guy!’

‘I was too happy to think about the future; besides, I did not know whether you had sufficient confidence in me.’

‘Confidence, nonsense! I tell you if I had a dozen daughters, I would trust them all to you.’

Guy smiled, and was infected by Charles’s burst of laughing, but Mr. Edmonstone went on unheeding—‘I have the most absolute confidence in you! I am going to write to Philip this minute, to tell him he has played three-tailed Bashaw rather too long. I shall tell him it is to be very soon, at any rate, and that if he wishes to see how I value his pragmatistical advice, he may come and dance at the wedding. I declare, your mamma and that colonel of his have perfectly spoilt him with their flattery! I knew what would

come of it; you all would make a prodigy of him, till he is so puffed up that he entirely forgets who he is !'

'Not I,' said Charles; 'that can't be laid to my door.'

'But I'll write him such a letter this instant as shall make him remember what he is, and show him who he has to deal with. Eh, Charlie?'

'Don't you think,' said Guy, preparing to go, 'that it might be better to wait a day or two, till we see our way clearer, and are a little cooler?'

'I tell you, Guy, there is no one that puts me out of patience now, but yourself. You are as bad as Philip himself. Cool? I am coolness itself, all but what's proper spirit for a man to show when his family is affronted and himself dictated to by a meddling young Jackanapes. I'll serve him out properly!'

A message called him away. Guy stood looking perplexed and sorrowful.

'Never mind,' said Charles, 'I'll take care the letter is moderate. Besides, it is only Philip, and he knows that letter-writing is not his forte.'

'I am afraid things will be said in irritation, which you will both regret. There are justice and reason in the letter.'

'There shall be more in the answer, as you will see.'

'No, I will not see. It is Mr. Edmonstone's concern, not mine. I am the last person who should have anything to do with it.'

'Just what the individual in question would not have said.'

'Would you do one thing to oblige me, Charlie?'

'Anything but not speaking my mind to, or of, the captain.'

'That is the very thing, unluckily. Try to get the answer put off till to-morrow, and that will give time to look at this letter candidly.'

'All the candour in the world will not make me think otherwise than that he is disappointed at being

no longer able to make us the puppets of his malevolence. Don't answer, or if you do, tell me what you say in favour of that delicate insinuation of his.'

Guy made a step towards the window, and a step back again. 'Tis not fair to ask such questions,' he replied, after a moment. 'It is throwing oil on the fire. I was trying to forget it. He neither knows my uncle nor the circumstances.'

'Well, I am glad there is a point on which you can't even pretend to stand up for him, or I should have thought you crazed with Quixotism. But I am keeping you when you want to be off to Amy. Never mind Mr. Ready-to-halt; I shall wait till my father comes back. If you want the letter put off, you had better give some hopes of—— Oh! he is gone, and disinterested advice it is of mine, for what is to become of me without Amy remains to be proved. Laura, poor thing, looks like Patience on a monument. I wonder whether Philip's disgrace has anything to do with it. Hum! If mamma's old idea was right, the captain has been more like moth and candle than consistent with his prudence, unless he thought it *à toute épreuve*. I wonder what came to pass last autumn, when I was ill, and mamma's head full of me. He may not intend it, and she may not know it, but I would by no means answer for Cupid's being guiltless of that harassed look she has had ever since that ball-going summer. Oh! there go that pretty study, Amy and her true knight. As to Guy, he is more incomprehensible than ever; yet there is no avoiding obeying him, on the principle on which that child in the 'Moorland cottage' said she should obey Don Quixote.'

So when his father came in, Charles wiled him into deferring the letter till the next day, by giving him an indistinct hope that some notion, when the marriage would be, might be arrived at by that time. He consented the more readily, because he was in haste to investigate a complaint that had just been made of the union doctor; but his last words to his wife and son

before he went, were—‘Of course, they must marry directly; there is nothing on earth to wait for. Live at Redclyffe alone? Not to be thought of. No; I’ll see little Amy my Lady Morville, before Philip goes abroad, if only to show him I am not a man to be dictated to.’

Mrs. Edmonstone sighed; but when he was gone, she agreed with Charles that there was nothing to wait for, and that it would be better for Guy to take his wife at once with him, when he settled at Redclyffe. So it must be whenever Amy could make up her mind to it; and thereupon they made plans for future meetings, Charles announcing that the Prince of the Black Isles would become locomotive, and Charlotte forming grand designs upon Shag Island.

In the meantime, Guy and Amy were walking in the path through the wood, where he began: ‘I would not have asked you to do anything so unpleasant as reading that letter, but I thought you ought to consider of it.’

‘It was just like himself! How could he?’ said Amy, indignantly.

‘I wonder whether he will ever see his own harshness?’ said Guy. ‘It is very strange, that with all his excellence and real kindness, there should be some distortion in his view of all that concerns me. I cannot understand it.’

‘You must let me call it prejudice, Guy, in spite of your protest. It is a relief to say something against him.’

‘Amy, don’t be venomous!’ said Guy, in a playful tone of reproach.

‘Yes; but you know it is not *me* whom he has been abusing.’

‘Well,’ said Guy, musingly, ‘I suppose it is right there should be this cloud, or it would be too bright for earth. It has been one of my chief wishes to have things straight with Philip, ever since the time he stayed at Redclyffe, as a boy. I saw his superiority then; but it fretted me, and I never could make a companion of

him. Ever since, I have looked to his approval as one of the best things to be won. It shows his ascendancy of character; yet, do what I will, the mist has gone on thickening between us; and with reason, for I have never been able to give him the confidence he required, and his conduct about my uncle has so tried my patience, that I never have been quite sure whether I ought to avoid him or not.'

'And now you are the only person who will speak for him. I don't wonder papa is provoked with you,' said she, pretending to be wilful. 'I only hope you don't want to make me do the same. I could bear anything better than his old saying about your attractive manners and good impulses, and his opinion that has never altered. O Guy, he is the most provoking person in all the world. Don't try to make me admire him, nor be sorry for him.'

'Not when you remember how he was looked on here? and how, without doing anything worthy of blame, nay, from his acting unsparingly, as he thought right, every one has turned against him? even mamma, who used to be so fond of him?

'Not Laura.'

'No, not Laura, and I am thankful to her for it; for all this makes me feel as if I had supplanted him.'

'Yes, yes, yes, it is like you; but don't ask me to feel that yet,' said Amy, with tears in her eyes, 'or I shall be obliged to tell you what you won't like to hear, about his tone of triumph that terrible time last year. It was so very different, I don't think I could ever forgive him, if it had not made *me* so miserable too.'

Guy pressed her arm. 'Yes; but he thought himself right. He meant to do the kindest thing by you,' said he, so entirely without effort, that no one could doubt it came straight from his heart. 'So he thinks still, Amy; there is fairness, justice, good sense in his letter, and we must not blind our eyes to it, though there is injustice, at least, harshness. I did fail egregiously in my first trial.'

‘Fail!’

‘In temper.’

‘Oh!’

‘And, Amy, I wanted to ask what you think about the four years he speaks of. Do you think, as he says, my habits might be more fixed, and altogether you might have more confidence?’

‘I don’t look on you quite as he does now,’ said Amy, with a very pretty smile. ‘Do you think his opinion of you will ever alter?’

‘But what do you think? Is there not some reason in what he says?’

‘The only use I can see is, that perhaps I should be wiser at twenty-four, and fitter to take care of such a great house; but then you have been always helping me to grow wiser, and I am not much afraid but that you will be patient with me. Indeed, Guy, I don’t know whether it is a thing I ought to say,’ she added, blushing, ‘but I think it would be dismal for you to go and live all alone at Redclyffe.’

‘Honestly, Amy,’ replied he, after a little pause, ‘if you feel so, and your father approves, I don’t think it will be better to wait. I know your presence is a safeguard, and if the right motives did not suffice to keep me straight, and I was only apparently so from hopes of you, why then I should be so utterly good for nothing at the bottom, if not on the surface, that you had better have nothing to say to me.’

Amy laughed incredulously.

‘That being settled,’ proceeded Guy, ‘did you hear what your father said as you left the breakfast-room?’

She coloured all over, and there was silence. ‘What did you answer?’ said she, at length.

‘I said, whatever happened, you must not be taken by surprise in having to decide quickly. Do you wish to have time to think? I’ll go in and leave you to consider, if you like.’

‘I only want to know what you wish,’ said Amy, not parting with his arm.

‘I had rather you did just as suits you best. Of course, you know what my wish must be.’

Amy walked on a little way in silence. ‘Very well,’ said she presently, ‘I think you and mamma had better settle it. The worst’—she had tears in her eyes—‘the going away—Mamma—Charlie—all that will be as bad at one time as at another.’ The tears flowed faster. ‘It had better be as you all like best.’

‘O Amy! I wonder at myself for daring to ask you to exchange your bright cheerful home for my gloomy old house.’

‘No, your home,’ said Amy, softly.

‘I used to wonder why it was called gloomy; but it will be so no more when you are there. Yet there is a shadow hanging over it, which makes it sometimes seem too strange that you and it should be brought together.’

‘I have read somewhere that there is no real gloom but what people raise for themselves.’

‘True. Gloom is in sin, not sorrow. Yes, there would be no comfort if I were not sure that if aught of grief or pain should come to you through me, it will not, cannot really hurt you, my Amy.’

‘No, unless by my own fault, and you will help me to meet it. Hark! was that a nightingale?’

‘Yes, the first! How beautiful! There—don’t you see it? Look on that hazel, you may see its throat moving. Well!’ when they had listened for a long time,—‘after all, that creature and the sea will hardly let one speak of gloom, even in this world, to say nothing of other things.’

‘The sea! I am glad I have never seen it, because now you will show it to me for the first time.’

‘You will never, can never imagine it, Amy!’ and he sung,—

‘With all tones of waters blending,
Glorious is the breaking deep,
Glorious, beauteous, without ending,
Songs of ocean never sleep.’

A silence followed, only broken by the notes of the birds, and presently by the strokes of the great clock. Guy looked at his watch.

‘Eleven, Amy! I must go to my reading, or you will have to be very much ashamed of me.’

For, after the first few days, Guy had returned to study regularly every day. He said it was a matter of necessity, not at all of merit, for though he did not mean to try for honours, Amy must not marry a plucked man. His whole career at Oxford had been such a struggle with the disadvantages of his education, that all his diligence had, he thought, hardly raised him to a level with his contemporaries. Moreover, courtship was not the best preparation for the schools, so that though he knew he had done his best, he expected no more than to pass respectably, and told Amy it was very good of her to be contented with a dunce, whereat she laughed merrily. But she knew him too well to try to keep him lingering in the April sunshine, and in they went, Guy to his Greek, and Amy to her mother. Charlotte’s lessons had been in abeyance, or turned over to Laura of late, and Mrs. Edmonstone and her dressing-room were always ready for the confidences of the family, who sought her there in turn—all but one, and that the one whose need was the sorest.

Amy and her mother comforted themselves with a good quiet cry, that was not exactly sorrowful, and came to the conclusion that Guy was the most considerate person in the world, and they would do whatever best suited him and papa. So, when Mr. Edmonstone came home, he was rewarded for putting off the letter by finding every one willing to let the marriage take place whenever he pleased. There were various conferences in the dressing-room, and Guy and Amy both had burning faces when they came down to dinner. Laura beheld them with a throbbing heart, while she mechanically talked to Dr. Mayerne, as if nothing was going on. She was glad there was no singing that evening, for she felt incapable of joining; and when at

night Charles and his father talked of sitting up to write to Philip, the misery was such that she had no relief till she had shut herself in her room, to bear or to crush the suffering as best she might.

She was still sitting helpless in her wretchedness when Amy knocked at the door, and came in glowing with blushes and smiles, though her eyelashes were dewy with tears.

‘Laura, dearest! if you would not be so very unhappy! I wish I knew what to do for you.’

Laura laid her head on her shoulder, and cried. It was a great comfort, little as Amy could understand her trouble. Amy kissed her, soothed her caressingly, cried too, and said, in broken sentences, how often they would be together, and how comfortable it was that Charlie was so much better, and Charlotte quite a companion.

‘Then you have fixed the day?’ whispered Laura, at last.

‘The Tuesday in Whitsunweek,’ returned Amy, resting her forehead on Laura’s shoulder. ‘They all thought it right.’

Laura flung her arms round her, and wept too much to speak.

‘Dear, dear Laura!’ said Amy, after a time, ‘it is very kind of you, but——’

‘Oh, Amy! you don’t know. You must not think so much better of me than I deserve. It is not only——No, I would not be so selfish, if, but—but—’ Never had her self-command so given way.

‘Ah! you are unhappy about Philip,’ said Amy; and Laura, alarmed lest she might have betrayed him, started, and tried to recover herself; but she saw Amy was quite unsuspecting, and the relief from this fright helped her through what her sister was saying,—‘Yes, you who were so fond of him, must be vexed at this unkindness on his part.’

‘I am sure it is his real wish for your good,’ murmured Laura.

‘I daresay!’ said Amy, with displeasure. Then changing her tone, ‘I beg your pardon, dear Laura, but I don’t think I can quite bear to hear any one but Guy defend him.’

‘It is very generous.’

‘Oh, is not it, Laura? and he says he is so grieved to see us turned against Philip, after being so fond of him; he says it makes him feel as if he had supplanted him, and that he is quite thankful to you for taking his part still.’

‘How shall I bear it?’ sighed Laura, to herself.

‘I wonder whether he will come?’ said Amy, thoughtfully.

‘He will,’ said Laura.

‘You think so?’ said Amy. ‘Well, Guy would be glad. Yes. O Laura, if Philip would learn to do Guy justice, I don’t think there would be any more to wish!’

‘He will in time,’ said Laura. ‘He is too generous not to be won by such generosity as Guy’s; and when all this is forgotten, and all these accusations have been lived down, he will be the warmest of friends.’

‘Yes,’ said Amy, as if she wished to be convinced; ‘but if he would only leave off saying his opinion has never altered, I think I could bring myself to look on him as Guy wants me to do. Good night! dear Laura, and don’t be unhappy. Oh! one thing I must tell you; Guy made Charles promise to do all he could not to let it be a hasty letter. Now, good night!’

Poor Laura, she knew not whether gratitude to Guy was not one of her most painful sensations. She wished much to know what had been said in the letter; but only one sentence transpired, and that was, that Mr. Edmonstone had never heard it was necessary to apply to a nephew for consent to a daughter’s marriage. It seemed as if it must have been as cutting as Charles could make it; but Laura trusted to Philip’s knowledge of the family, and desire for their good, to make him forgive it; and the expectation of seeing him again at

the wedding, cheered her. Indeed, a hope of still greater consequences began to rise in her mind, after Charles one day said to her, 'I think you ought to be much obliged to Guy. This morning, he suddenly exclaimed, 'I say, Charlie, I wish you would take care Amy's fortune is not settled on her so that it can't be got rid of.' I asked how he meant to make ducks and drakes of it; and he explained, that if either of you two did not happen to marry for money, like Amy, it might do you no harm.'

'We are very much obliged to him,' said Laura, more earnestly than Charles had expected. 'Do you know what it is, Charlie?'

'Oh! you want to calculate the amount of your obligation! Somewhere about five thousand pounds, I believe.'

Charles watched Laura, and the former idea recurred, as he wondered whether there was any particular meaning in her inquiry.

Meaning, indeed, there was. Laura knew nothing about the value of money; she did not know what Philip had of his own; how far five, or even ten, thousand would go in enabling them to marry, or whether it was available in her father's lifetime; but she thought this prospect might smooth the way to the avowal of their attachment, as effectually as his promotion; she reckoned on relief from the weary oppression of secrecy, and fully expected that it would all be told in the favourable juncture, when her parents were full of satisfaction in Amy's marriage. Gratitude to Guy would put an end to all doubt, dislike, and prejudice, and Philip would receive him as a brother.

These hopes supported Laura, and enabled her to take part with more appearance of interest in the consultations and arrangements for the marriage, which were carried on speedily, as the time was short, and Mr. Edmonstone's ideas were on a grand scale. It seemed as if he meant to invite all the world, and there were no limits to his views of breakfast, carriages, and

splendours. His wife let him run on without contradiction, leaving the plans either to evaporate or condense, as time might prove best. Guy took Amy out walking, and asked what she thought of it.

‘Do you dislike it very much?’ she said.

‘I can hardly tell. Of course, as a general rule, the less parade and nonsense the better; but if your father wishes it, and if people *do* find enjoyment in that way, it seems hard they should not have all they can out of it.’

‘Oh, yes; the school children and poor people,’ said Amy.

‘How happy the Ashford children will be, feasting the poor people at Redclyffe! Old Jonas Ledbury will be in high glory.’

‘To be sure, it does not seem like merit to feast one’s poor neighbours rather than the rich. It is so much pleasanter.’

‘However, since the poor will be feasted, I don’t think the rich ones will do us much harm.’

‘I am sure I shall know very little about them,’ said Amy.

‘The realities are so great to us, that they will swallow up the accessories. There must be the church, and all that; and for the rest, Amy, I don’t think I shall find out whether you wear lace or grogram.’

‘There’s encouragement for me!’ said Amy, laughing. ‘However, what I mean is, that I don’t care about it, if I am not obliged to attend, and give my mind, to those kind of things just then, and that mamma will take care of.’

‘Is it not a great trouble for her? I forgot that. It was selfish: for we slip out of the fuss, and it all falls on her.’

‘Yes,’ said Amy; ‘but don’t you think it would tease her more to have to persuade papa out of what he likes, and alter every little matter. That would be worry, the rest only exertion; and, do you know, I think,’ said she, with a rising tear, ‘that it will be

better for her, to keep her from thinking about losing me.'

'I see. Very well, we will take the finery quietly. Only one thing, Amy, we will not be put out of,—we will not miss the full holyday service.'

'Oh, yes; that will be the comfort.'

'One other thing, Amy. You know I have hardly a friend of my own; but there is one person I should like to ask,—Markham. He has been so kind, and so much attached to me; he loved my father so devotedly, and suffered so much at his death, that it is a pity he should not be made happy; and very happy he will be.'

'And there is one person I should like to ask, Guy, if mamma thinks we can do it. I am sure little Marianne ought to be one of my bridesmaids. Charlotte would take care of her, and it would be very nice to have her.'

CHAPTER VI.

But no kind influence deign they shower,
Till pride be quelled and love be free.

SCOTT.

KILCORAN was about twenty miles from Cork, and Captain Morville was engaged to go and spend a day or two there. Maurice de Courcy drove him thither, wishing all the way for some other companion, since no one ever ventured to smoke a cigar in the proximity of 'Morville;' and, besides, Maurice's conversational powers were obliged to be entirely bestowed on his horse and dog, for the captain, instead of, as usual, devoting himself to suit his talk to his audience, was wrapped in the deepest meditation, now and then taking out a letter and referring to it.

This letter was the reply jointly compounded by Mr. Edmonstone and Charles, and the subject of his consideration was, whether he should accept the invitation to the wedding. Charles had taken care fully to explain how the truth respecting the cheque had come out, and Philip could no longer suspect that it had been a fabrication of Dixon's; but while Guy persisted in denial of any answer about the thousand pounds, he thought the renewal of the engagement extremely imprudent. He was very sorry for poor little Amy, for her comfort and happiness were, he thought, placed in the utmost jeopardy, with such a hot temper, under the most favourable circumstances; and there was the further peril, that when the novelty of the life with her at Redclyffe had passed off, Guy might seek for excite-

ment in the dissipation to which his uncle had probably already introduced him. In the four years' probation, he saw the only hope of steadying Guy, or of saving Amy; and he was much concerned at the rejection of his advice, entirely for their sakes, for he could not condescend to be affronted at the scornful, satirical tone towards himself, in which Charles's little spitefulness was so fully apparent.

The wedding was a regular sacrifice, and Amabel was nothing but a victim; but an invitation to Hollywell had a charm for him that he scarcely could resist. To see Laura again, after having parted, as he thought, for so many years, delighted him in anticipation; and it would manifest his real interest in his young cousins, and show that he was superior to taking offence at the folly of Charles or his father.

These were his first thoughts and inclinations; his second were, that it was contrary to his principles to sanction so foolish and hasty a marriage by his presence, that he should thus be affording a triumph to Guy, and to one who would use it less moderately—to Charles. It would be more worthy of himself, more consistent with his whole course of conduct, to refuse his presence, instead of going amongst them when they were all infatuated, and unable to listen to sober counsel. If he stayed away now, when Guy should have justified his opinion, they would all own how wisely he had acted, and would see the true dignity which had refused, unlike common minds, to let his complaisance draw him into giving any sanction to what he so strongly disapproved. Laura, too, would pass through this trying time better if she was not distracted by watching him; she would understand the cause of his absence, and he could trust her to love and comprehend him at a distance, better than he could trust her to hear the marriage-service in his presence without betraying herself. Nor did he wish to hear her again plead for the confession of their engagement; and, supposing any misadventure should lead to its betrayal, what could be more unplea-

sant than for it to be revealed at such a time, when Charles would so turn it against him, that all his influence and usefulness would be for ever at an end?

Love drew him one way, and consistency another; Captain Morville had never been so much in the condition of Mahomet's coffin in his life; and he grew more angry with his uncle, Charles, and Guy, for having put him in so unpleasant a predicament. So the self-debate lasted all the way to Kilcoran; and he only had two comforts—one, that he had sent the follower who was always amenable to good advice, safe out of the way of Lady Eveleen, to spend his leave of absence at Thorndale—the other, that Maurice de Courcy was, as yet, ignorant of the Hollywell news, and did not torment him by talking about it.

This satisfaction, however, lasted no longer than till their arrival at Kilcoran; for, the instant they entered the drawing-room, Lady Eveleen exclaimed, 'O Maurice, I have been so longing for you to come! Captain Morville, I hope you have not told him, for I can't flatter myself to be beforehand with you, now at least.'

'He has told me nothing,' said Maurice; 'indeed, such bad company has seldom been seen as he has been all the way.'

'You don't mean that you don't know it! How delightful! O mamma! think of knowing something Captain Morville does not!'

'I am afraid I cannot flatter you so far,' said Philip, knowing this was no place for allowing his real opinion to be guessed.

'Then you do know?' said Lady Kilcoran, sleepily; 'I am sure it is a subject of great rejoicing.'

'But what is it, Eva? Make haste and tell,' said Maurice.

'No; you must guess!'

'Why, you would not be in such a way about it if it was not a wedding.'

‘Right, Maurice ; now, who is it ?’

‘One of the Edmonstones, I suppose. ’Tis Laura ?’

‘Wrong !’

‘What, not Laura ? I thought she would have been off first. Somebody’s got no taste, then, for Laura is the prettiest girl I know.’

‘Ah ! your heart has escaped breaking this time, Maurice. It is that little puss, Amy, that has made a great conquest. Now guess.’

‘Oh ! young Morville, of course. But what possessed him to take Amy, and leave Laura ?’

‘Perhaps Laura was not to be had. Men are so self-sufficient, that they always think they may pick and choose. Is not it so, Captain Morville ? I like Sir Guy better than most men, but Laura is too good for any one I know. If I could make a perfect hero, I would at once ; only Charles would tell me all the perfect heroes in books are bores. How long have you known of it, Captain Morville ?’

‘For the last ten days.’

‘And you never mentioned it ?’

‘I did not know whether they intended to publish it.’

‘Now, Captain Morville, I hope to make some progress in your good opinion. Of course, you believe I can’t keep a secret ; but what do you think of my having known it ever since last summer, and held my tongue all that time ?’

‘A great effort, indeed,’ said Philip, smiling. ‘It would have been greater, I suppose, if the engagement had been positive, not conditional.’

‘Oh ! every one knew what it must come to. No one could have the least fear of Sir Guy. Yes ; I saw it all. I gave my little aid, and I am sure I have a right to be bridesmaid, as I am to be. Oh ! won’t it be charming ? It is to be the grandest wedding that ever was seen. It is to be on Whit-Tuesday ; and papa is going to take me and Aunt Charlotte ; for old Aunt Mabel says Aunt Charlotte must go. There are to be

six bridesmaids, and a great party at the breakfast; everything as splendid as possible; and I made Mrs. Edmonstone promise from the first that we should have a ball. You must go, Maurice.'

'I shall be on the high seas!'

'Oh yes, that is horrid! But you don't sail with the regiment, I think, Captain Morville. You surely go?'

'I am not certain,' said Philip; especially disgusted by hearing of the splendour, and thinking that he had supposed Guy would have had more sense; and it showed how silly Amy really was, since she was evidently only anxious to enjoy the full paraphernalia of a bride.

'Not certain!' exclaimed Maurice and Eveleen in a breath.

'I am not sure that I shall have time. You know I have been intending to make a walking tour through Switzerland before joining at Corfu.'

'And you really would prefer going by yourself—'apart, unfriended, melancholy, slow.''

'Very slow, indeed,' said Maurice.

'A wedding is a confused melancholy affair,' said Philip. 'You know I am no dancing man, Lady Eveleen; one individual like myself can make little difference to persons engrossed with their own affairs; I can wish my cousins well from a distance as well as at hand; and though they have been kind enough to ask me, I think that while their house is overflowing with guests of more mark, my room will be preferred to my company.'

'Then you do not mean to go?' said Lady Kilcoran. 'I do not,' she continued, 'for my health is never equal to so much excitement, and it would only be giving poor Mrs. Edmonstone additional trouble to have to attend to me.'

'So you really mean to stay away!' said Eveleen.

'I have not entirely decided.'

'At any rate you must go and tell old Aunt Mabel all about them,' said Eveleen. 'She is so delighted.'

You will be quite worshipped, at the cottage, for the very name of Morville. I spend whole hours in discoursing on Sir Guy's perfections.'

Philip could not refuse; but his feelings towards Guy were not warmed by the work he had to go through, when conducted to the cottage, where lived old Lady Mabel Edmonstone and her daughter, and there required to dilate on Guy's excellence. He was not wanted to speak of any of the points where his conscience would not let him give a favourable report; it was quite enough for him to tell of Guy's agreeable manners and musical talents, and to describe the beauty and extent of Redclyffe. Lady Mabel and Miss Edmonstone were transported; and the more Philip saw of the light and superficial way in which the marriage was considered, the more unwilling he became to confound himself with such people by eagerness to be present at it, and to join in the festivities. Yet he exercised great forbearance in not allowing one word of his disapproval or misgivings to escape him; no censure was uttered, and Lady Eveleen herself could not make out whether he rejoiced or not. He was grave and philosophical, superior to nonsensical mirth, that was all that she saw; and he made himself very agreeable throughout his visit, by taking condescending interest in all that was going on, and especially to Lady Eveleen, by showing that he thought her worthy of rational converse.

He made himself useful, as usual. Lord Kilcoran wanted a tutor for his two youngest boys, and it had been proposed to send them to Mr. Wellwood, at his curacy at Coombe Prior. He wished to know what Captain Morville thought of the plan; and Philip, thinking that Mr. Wellwood had been very inattentive to Guy's proceedings at St. Mildred's, though he would not blame him, considered it very fortunate that he had a different plan to recommend. One of the officers of his regiment had lately had staying with him a brother who had just left Oxford, and was looking out for a tutorship, a very clever and agreeable young man.

whom he liked particularly, and he strongly advised Lord Kilcoran to keep his sons under his own eye, and place them under the care of this gentleman. His advice, especially when enforced by his presence, was almost sure to prevail, and thus it was in the present case.

The upshot of his visit was, that he thought worse and worse of the sense of the whole Edmonstone connexion,—considered that it would be of no use for him to go to Hollywell,—adhered to his second resolution, and wrote to his uncle a calm and lofty letter, free from all token of offence, expressing every wish for the happiness of Guy and Amabel, and thanking his uncle for the invitation, which, however, he thought it best to decline, much as he regretted losing the opportunity of seeing Hollywell and its inhabitants again. His regiment would sail for Corfu either in May or June; but he intended, himself, to travel on foot through Germany and Italy, and would write again before quitting Ireland.

‘So,’ said Charles, ‘there were at the marriage the Picanninies, and the Joblillies, and the Garryulies, but not the Grand Panjandrum himself.’

‘Nor the little round button at top!’ rejoined Charlotte.

‘Well, it’s his own look out,’ said Mr. Edmonstone. ‘It is of a piece with all the rest.’

‘I am sure we don’t want him,’ said Charlotte.

‘Not in this humour,’ said her mother.

Amy said nothing; and if she did not allow herself to avow that his absence was a relief, it was because she saw it was a grief and disappointment to Guy.

Laura was, of course, very much mortified,—almost beyond the power of concealment. She thought he would have come for the sake of seeing her; and she had reckoned so much on this meeting, that it was double vexation. He did not know what he was missing by not coming; and she could not inform him, for writing to him was impossible, without the

underhand dealings to which they would never, either of them, have recourse. So much for herself; and his perseverance in disapproval, in spite of renewed explanation, made her more anxious and sorry on Amy's account. Very mournful were poor Laura's sensations; but there was no remedy but to try to bewilder and drive them away in the bustle of preparation.

Guy had to go and take his degree, and then return to make his own preparations at Redclyffe. Amy begged him, as she knew he would like, to leave things alone as much as possible; for she could not bear old places to be pulled to pieces to suit new comers; and she should like to find it just as he had been used to it.

He smiled, and said, 'It should only be made habitable.' She must have a morning-room, about which he would consult Mrs. Ashford; and he would choose her piano himself. The great drawing-room had never been unpacked since his grandmother's time, so that must be in repair; and, as for a garden, they would lay it out together. There could not be much done; for though they did not talk of it publicly, lest they should shock Mr. Edmonstone, they meant to go home directly after their marriage.

To Oxford, then, went Guy; his second letter announced that he had done tolerably well on his examination; and it came round to the Edmonstones, that it was a great pity he had not gone up for honours, as he would certainly have distinguished himself.

Redclyffe was, of course, in a state of great excitement at the news that Sir Guy was going to be married. Markham was very grand with the letter that announced it, and could find nothing to grumble about but that the lad was very young, and it was lucky it was no worse.

Mrs. Ashford was glad it was so good a connexion, and obtained all the intelligence she could from James Thorndale, who spoke warmly of the Hollywell family

in general ; and, in particular, said that the young ladies looked after schools and poor people,—that Miss Edmonstone was very handsome and clever—a very superior person ; but as to Miss Amabel, he did not know that there was anything to say about her. She was just like other young ladies, and very attentive to her invalid brother.

Markham's enmity to Mr. Ashford had subsided at the bidding of his master ; and he informed him one day, with great cordiality, that Sir Guy would be at home the next. He was to sleep that night at Coombe Prior, and ride to Redclyffe in the morning ; and, to the great delight of the boys, it was at the parsonage door that he dismounted.

Mrs. Ashford looked up in his bright face, and saw no more of the shade that had perplexed her last winter. His cheeks were deeper red as she warmly shook hands with him ; and then the children sprung upon him for their old games,—the boys claiming his promise, with all their might, to take them out to the Shag. She wondered when she should venture to talk to him about Miss Amabel.

He next went to find Markham, and met him before he reached his house. Markham was too happy not to grunt and grumble more than ever.

‘Well, Sir Guy ; so, here you are ! You’ve lost no time about it, however. A fine pair of young house-keepers, and a pretty example of early marriages for the parish !’

Guy laughed. ‘You must come and see the example, Markham. I have a message from Mr. and Mrs. Edmonstone, to ask you to come to Hollywell at Whitsuntide.’

Grunt ! ‘You are making a fool of me, Sir Guy. What’s a plain old man like me to do among all your lords and ladies, and finery and flummery ? I’ll do no such thing.’

‘Not to oblige me ?’

‘Oblige you ? Nonsense ! Much you’ll care for me !’

‘Nay, Markham, you must not stay away. You, my oldest and best friend,—my only home friend. I owe all my present happiness to you, and it would really be a great disappointment to me if you did not come. She wishes it, too.’

‘Well, Sir Guy,’ and the grunt was of softer tone, ‘if you do choose to make a fool of me, I can’t help it. You must have your own way; though you might have found a friend that would do you more credit.’

‘Then I may say that you will come?’

‘Say I am very much obliged to Mr. and Mrs. Edmonstone for their invitation. It is very handsome of them.’

‘Then you will have the settlements ready by that time. You must, Markham.’

‘I’ll see about it.’

‘And the house must be ready to come home to at once.’

‘You don’t know what you are talking of, Sir Guy!’ exclaimed Markham, at once aghast and angry.

‘Yes, I do. We don’t intend to turn the house upside down with new furniture.’

‘You may talk as you please, Sir Guy; but I know what’s what; and it is mere nonsense to talk of bringing a lady to a house in this condition. A pretty notion you have of what is fit for your bride! I hope she knows what sort of care you mean to take of her!’

‘She will be satisfied,’ said Guy. ‘She particularly wishes not to have everything disarranged. I only must have two rooms furnished for her.’

‘But the place wants painting from head to foot; and the roof is in such a state—’

‘The roof? That’s serious!’

‘Serious! I believe so. You’ll have it about your ears in no time, if you don’t look sharp.’

‘I’ll look this minute,’ said Guy, jumping up. ‘Will you come with me?’

Up he went, climbing about in the forest of ancient timbers, where he could not but be convinced that there was more reason than he could wish in what Markham said, and that his roof was in no condition to bring his bride to. Indeed, it was probable that it had never been thoroughly repaired since the time of old Sir Hugh, for the Morvilles had not been wont to lay out money on what did not make a display. Guy was in dismay; he sent for the builder from Moorworth; calculated times and costs; but, do what he would, he could not persuade himself that when once the workmen were in Redclyffe, they would be out again before the autumn.

Guy was very busy during the fortnight he spent at home. There were the builder and his plans, and Markham and the marriage settlements, and there were orders to be given about the furniture. He came to Mrs. Ashford about this, conducted her to the park, and begged her to be so kind as to be his counsellor, and to superintend the arrangement. He showed her what was to be Amy's morning-room—now bare and empty, but with the advantages of a window looking south, upon the green wooded slope of the park, with a view of the church tower, and of the moors, which were of very fine form. He owned himself to be profoundly ignorant about upholstery matters, and his ideas of furniture seemed to consist in prints for the walls, a piano, a bookcase, and a couch for Charles.

‘You have heard about Charles?’ said he, raising his bright face from the list of needful articles which he was writing, using the window-seat as a table.

‘Not much,’ said Mrs. Ashford. ‘Is he entirely confined to the sofa?’

‘He cannot move without crutches; but no one could guess what he is without seeing him. He is so patient, his spirits never flag; and it is beautiful to see how considerate he is, and what interest he takes in all the things he never can share, poor fellow. I don't know what Hollywell would be without Charlie! I

wonder how soon he will be able to come here ! Hardly this year, I am afraid, for things must be comfortable for him ; and I shall never get them so without Amy, and then it will be autumn. Well ; what next ? Oh ! you said window-curtains. Some blue sort of stuff, I suppose, like the drawing-room ones at Hollywell. What's the name of it ?

In fact, Mrs. Ashford was much of his opinion, that he never would make things comfortable without Amy, though he gave his best attention to the inquiries that were continually made of him ; and, where he had an idea, carried it out to the utmost. He knew much better what he was about in the arrangements for Coombe Prior, where he had installed his friend Mr. Wellwood, and set on foot many plans for improvements, giving them as much attention as if he had nothing else to occupy his mind. Both the curate and Markham were surprised that he did not leave these details till his return home ; but he answered,—

‘Better do things while we may. The thought of this unhappy place is enough to poison everything ; and I don't think I could rest without knowing that the utmost was being done for it.’

He was very happy making arrangements for a village feast on the wedding-day. The Ashfords asked if he would not put it off till his return, and preside himself.

‘It won't hurt them to have one first. Let them make sure of all the fun they can,’ he answered ; and the sentiment was greatly applauded by Edward and Robert, who followed him about more than ever, and grew so fond of him, that it made them very angry to be reminded of the spirit of defiance in which their acquaintance had begun. Nevertheless, they seemed to be preparing the same spirit for his wife, for when their mother told them they must not expect to monopolize him thus when he was married, they declared, that they did not want a Lady Morville at all, and could not think why he was so stupid as to want a wife.

Their father predicted that he would never have time to fulfil his old engagement of taking them out to the Shag Rock; but the prediction was not verified, for he rowed both them and Mr. Ashford thither one fine May afternoon, showed them all they wanted to see, and let them scramble to their hearts' content. He laughed at their hoard of scraps of the wood of the wreck, which they said their mamma had desired them to fetch for her.

So many avocations came upon Guy at once,—so many of the neighbours came to call on him,—such varieties of people wanted to speak to him,—the boys followed him so constantly,—and he had so many invitations from Mr. Wellwood and the Ashfords, that he never had any time for himself, except what must be spent in writing to Amabel. There was a feeling upon him, that he must have time to commune with himself, and rest from this turmoil of occupation, in the solitude of which Redclyffe had hitherto been so full. He wanted to be alone with his old home, and take leave of it, and of the feelings of his boyhood, before beginning on this new era of his life; but whenever he set out for a solitary walk, before he could even get to the top of the crag, either Markham marched up to talk over some important question,—a farmer waylaid him to make some request,—some cottager met him, to tell of a grievance,—Mr. Wellwood rode over,—or the Ashford boys rushed up, and followed like his shadow.

At length, on Ascension day, the last before he was to leave Redclyffe, with a determination that he would escape for once from his pursuers, he walked to the Cove as soon as he returned from morning service, launched his little boat, and pushed off into the rippling, whispering waters. It was a resumption of the ways of his boyhood; it seemed like a holiday, to have left all these cares behind him, just as it used to be when all his lessons were prepared, and he had leave to disport himself, by land or water, the whole afternoon,

provided he did not go out beyond the Shag Rock. He took up his sculls and rowed merrily, singing and whistling to keep time with their dash ; the return to the old pleasure quite enough at first, the salt breeze, the dashing waves, the motion of the boat. So he went on till he had come as far as his former boundary, then he turned, and gazed back on the precipitous rocks, cleft with deep fissures, marbled with veins of different shades of red, and tufted here and there with clumps of samphire, grass, and a little brushwood, bright with the early green of spring. The white foam and spray were leaping against their base, and roaring in their hollows ; the tract of wavelets between glittered in light, or heaved green under the shadow of the passing clouds ; the sea-birds floated smoothly in sweeping undulating lines,

As though life's only call and care

Were graceful motion ;

the hawks poised themselves high in air near the rocks. The Cove lay in sunshine, its rough stone chimneys and rude slate roofs overgrown with moss and fern, rising rapidly, one above the other, in the fast descending hollow, through which a little stream rushed to the sea, —more quietly than its brother, which, at some space distant, fell sheer down over the crag in a white line of foam, brawling with a tone of its own, distinguishable among all the voices of the sea contending with the rocks. Above the village, in the space where the outline of two hills met and crossed, rose the pinnaced tower of the village church, the unusual height of which was explained by the old custom of lighting a beacon-fire on its summit, to serve as a guide to the boats at sea. Still higher, apparently on the very brow of the beetling crag that frowned above, stood the old Gothic hall, crumbling and lofty, a fit eyrie for the eagles of Morville. The sunshine was indeed full upon it ; but it served to show how many of the dark windows were without the lining of blinds and curtains, that alone gives the look of life and habitation to a house. How

crumbled by sea-wind were the old walls, and the aspect altogether full of a dreary haughtiness, suiting with the whole of the stories connected with its name, from the time when it was said the very dogs crouched and fled from the presence of the sacrilegious murderer of the Archbishop, to the evening when the heir of the line lay stretched a corpse before his father's gate.

Guy sat resting on his oars, gazing at the scene, full of happiness, yet with a sense that it might be too bright to last, as if it scarcely befitted one like himself. The bliss before him, though it was surely a beam from heaven, was so much above him, that he hardly dared to believe it real : like a child repeating, 'is it my own, my very own?' and pausing before it will venture to grasp at a prize beyond its hopes. He feared to trust himself fully, lest it should carry him away from his self-discipline, and dazzle him too much to let him keep his gaze on the light beyond ; and he rejoiced in this time of quiet, to enable him to strive for power over his mind, to prevent himself from losing in gladness the balance he had gained in adversity.

It was such a check as he might have wished for, to look at that grim old castle, recollect who he was, and think of the frail tenure of all earthly joy, especially for one of the house of Morville. Could that abode ever be a home for a creature like Amy, with the bright innocent mirth that seemed too soft and sweet ever to be overshadowed by gloom and sorrow? Perhaps she might be early taken from him in the undimmed beauty of her happiness and innocence, and he might have to struggle through a long lonely life, with only the remembrance of short-lived joy to lighten it ; and when he reflected that this was only a melancholy fancy, the answer came from within, that there was nothing peculiar to him in the perception that earthly happiness was fleeting. It was best that so it should be, and that he should rest in the trust that brightened

on him through all,—that neither life nor death, sorrow nor pain, could separate, for ever, him and his Amy.

And he looked up into the deep blue sky over head, murmuring to himself, ‘In heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell;’ and gazed long and intently as he rocked on the green waters, till he again spoke to himself,—‘Why stand ye here gazing up into heaven?’ then pulled vigorously back to the shore, leaving a shining wake far behind him.

CHAPTER VII.

Hark, how the birds do sing,
And woods do ring !
All creatures have their joy, and man hath his ;
Yet if we rightly measure,
Man's joy and pleasure
Rather hereafter than in present is ;
Not that he may not here
Taste of the cheer,
But as birds drink and straight lift up the head,
So must he sip and think
Of better drink
He may attain to after he is dead.

HERBERT.

GUY returned to Hollywell on the Friday, there to spend a quiet week with them all, for it was a special delight to Amy that Hollywell and her family were as precious to him for their own sakes as for hers. It was said that it was to be a quiet week—but with all the best efforts of Mrs. Edmonstone and Laura to preserve quiet, there was an amount of confusion that would have been very disturbing, but for Amy's propensity never to be ruffled or fluttered.

What was to be done in the honeymoon was the question for consideration. Guy and Amy would have liked to make a tour among the English cathedrals, pay a visit at Hollywell, and then go home and live in a corner of the house till the rest was ready ; for Amy could not see why she should take up so much more room than old Sir Guy, and Guy declared he could not see that happiness was a reason for going pleasure-hunting ; but Charles pronounced this very stupid, and Mr. Edmonstone thought a journey on the Continent was the only proper thing for them to do. Mrs. Ed-

monstone wished Amy to see a little of the world. Amy was known to have always desired to see Switzerland; it occurred to Guy that it would be a capital opportunity of taking Arnaud to see the relations he had been talking for the last twenty years of visiting, and so they acquiesced; for as Guy said, when they talked it over together, it did not seem to him to come under the denomination of pleasure-hunting, since they had not devised it for themselves: they had no house to go to; they should do Arnaud a service, and perhaps they should meet Philip.

‘That will not be pleasure-hunting, certainly,’ said Amy; then, remembering that he could not bear to hear Philip under-rated, she added, ‘I mean, unless you could convince him, and then it would be more than pleasure.’

‘It would be my first of unattained wishes,’ said Guy. ‘Then we will enjoy the journey.’

‘No fear on that score.’

‘And for fear we should get too much into the stream of enjoyment, as people abroad forget home-duties, let us stick to some fixed time for coming back.’

‘You said Redclyffe would be ready by Michaelmas.’

‘I have told the builder it must be. So, Amy, as far as it depends on ourselves, we are determined to be at home by Michaelmas.’

All seemed surprised to find the time for the wedding so near at hand. Charles’s spirits began to flag, Amy was a greater loss to him than to anybody else; she could never again be to him what she had been, and unable as he was to take part in the general bustle and occupation, he had more time for feeling this, much more than his mother and Laura, who were employed all day. He and Guy were exemplary in their civilities to each other in not engrossing Amy, and one who had only known him three years ago, when he was all exaction and selfishness, could have hardly believed him to be the same person who was now only striving

to avoid giving pain, by showing how much it cost him to yield up his sister. He could contrive to be merry, but the difficulty was to be cheerful; he could make them all laugh in spite of themselves, but when alone with Amy, or when hearing her devolve on her sisters the services she had been wont to perform for him, it was almost more than he could endure; but then he dreaded setting Amy off into one of her silent crying-fits, for which the only remedy was the planning a grand visit to Redclyffe, and talking over all the facilities of railroads and carriages.

The last day had come, and a long, strange one it was; not exactly joyful to any, and very sad to some, though Amy, with her sweet pensive face, seemed to have a serenity of her own that soothed them whenever they looked at her. Charlotte, though inclined to be wild and flighty, was checked and subdued in her presence; Laura could not be entirely wretched about her; Charles lay and looked at her without speaking; her father never met her without kissing her on each side of her face, and calling her his little jewel; her mother—but who could describe Mrs. Edmonstone on that day, so full of the present pain, contending with the unselfish gladness.

Guy kept out of the way, thinking Amy ought to be left to them. He sat in his own room a good while, afterwards rode to Broadstone, in coming home made a long visit to Mr. Ross; and when he returned, he found Charles in his wheeled chair on the lawn, with Amy sitting on the grass by his side. He sat down by her, and there followed a long silence,—one of those pauses full of meaning.

‘When shall we three meet again!’ at length said Charles, in a would-be lively tone.

‘And where?’ said Amy.

‘Here,’ said Charles; ‘you will come here to tell your adventures and take up Bustle.’

‘I hope so,’ said Guy. ‘We could not help it. The telling you about it will be a treat to look forward to all the time.’

‘Yes, your sight-seeing is a public benefit. You have seen many a thing for me.’

‘That is the pleasure of seeing and hearing, the thing that is not fleeting,’ said Guy.

‘The unselfish part, you mean,’ said Charles; and mused again, till Guy, starting up, exclaimed—

‘There are the people!’ as a carriage came in view in the lane. ‘Shall I wheel you home, Charlie?’

‘Yes, do.’

Guy leant over the back, and pushed him along; and as he did so, murmured in a low tremulous tone, ‘Wherever or whenever we may be destined to meet, Charlie, or if never again, I must thank you for a great part of my happiness here—for a great deal of kindness and sympathy.’

Charles looked straight before him, and answered— ‘The kindness was all on your part. I had nothing to give in return but ill-temper and exactions. But, Guy, you must not think I have not felt all you have done for me. You have made a new man of me, instead of a wretched stick, laughing at my misery, to persuade myself and others that I did not feel it. I hope you are proud of it.’

‘As if I had anything to do with it!’

‘Hadn’t you, that’s all! I know what you won’t deny, at any rate,—what a capital man of all-work you have been to me, when I had no right to ask it, as now we have,’ he added, smiling, because Amy was looking at him, but not making a very successful matter of the smile. ‘When you come back, you’ll see me treat you as indeed ‘a man and a brother.’’

This talk retarded them a little, and they did not reach the house till the guests were arriving. The first sight that met the eyes of Aunt Charlotte and Lady Eveleen as they entered, was, in the frame of the open window, Guy’s light agile figure, assisting Charles up the step, his brilliant hazel eyes and glowing healthy complexion contrasting with Charles’s pale, fair, delicate face, and features sharpened and refined by suffering.

Amy, her deep blushes and downcast eyes almost hidden by her glossy curls, stood just behind, carrying her brother's crutch.

'There they are,' cried Miss Edmonstone, springing forward from her brother and his wife, and throwing her arms round Amy in a warm embrace. 'My dear, dear little niece, I congratulate you with all my heart, and that I do.'

'I'll spare your hot cheeks, Amy dearest!' whispered Eveleen, as Amy passed to her embrace; while Aunt Charlotte hastily kissed Charles, and proceeded—'I don't wait for an introduction;' and vehemently shook hands with Guy.

'Ay, did I say a word too much in his praise?' said Mr. Edmonstone. 'Isn't he all out as fine a fellow as I told you?'

Guy was glad to turn away to shake hands with Lord Kilcoran, and the next moment he drew Amy out of the group eagerly talking round Charles's sofa, and holding her hand, led her up to a sturdy, ruddy-brown, elderly man who had come in at the same time, but after the first reception had no share in the family greetings. 'You know him already,' said Guy; and Amy held out her hand, saying—

'Yes, I am sure I do.'

Markham was taken by surprise; he gave a most satisfied grunt and shook hands as heartily as if she had been his favourite niece.

'And the little girl?' said Amy.

'O yes,—I picked her up at St. Mildred's: one of the servants took charge of her in the hall.'

'I'll fetch her,' cried Charlotte, as Amy was turning to the door, and the next moment she led in little Marianne Dixon, clinging to her hand. Amy kissed her, and held her fast in her arms, and Marianne looked up, consoled in her bewilderment, by the greeting of her dear old friend, Sir Guy.

Mr. Edmonstone patted her head; and when the

others had spoken kindly to her, Charlotte, under whose especial charge Guy and Amy had placed her, carried her off to the regions up stairs.

The rest of the evening was hurry and confusion. Mrs. Edmonstone was very busy, and glad to be so, as she must otherwise have given way; and there was Aunt Charlotte to be talked to, whom they had not seen since Charles's illness. She was a short, bustling, active person, with a joyous face, inexhaustible good humour, a considerable touch of Irish, and referring everything to her mother,—her one thought. Everything was to be told to her; and the only drawback to her complete pleasure was the anxiety lest she should be missed at home.

Mrs. Edmonstone was occupied with her, telling her the history of the engagement, and praising Guy; Amy went up, as soon as dinner was over, to take leave of old nurse, and to see little Marianne; and Eveleen sat between Laura and Charlotte, asking many eager questions, which were not all convenient to answer.

Why Sir Guy had not been at home at Christmas, was a query to which it seemed as if she should never gain a reply; for that Charles had been ill, and Guy at Redclyffe, was no real answer; and finding she should not be told, she wisely held her tongue. Again she made an awkward inquiry—

‘Now tell me, is Captain Morville pleased about this or not?’

Laura would have been silent, trusting to Eveleen's propensity for talking, for bringing her to some speech that it might be easier to answer, but Charlotte exclaimed, ‘What has he been saying about it?’

‘Saying? O nothing. But why does not he come?’

‘You have seen him more lately than we have,’ said Laura.

‘That is an evasion,’ said Eveleen; ‘as if you did not know more of his mind than I could ever get at, if I saw him every day of my life.’

‘He is provoking, that is all,’ answered Charlotte. ‘I am sure we don’t want him; but Laura and Guy will both of them take his part.’

A call came at that moment,—the box of white gloves was come, and Laura must come and count them. She would fain have taken Charlotte with her; but neither Charlotte nor Eveleen appeared disposed to move, and she was obliged to leave them. Eva had already guessed that there was more chance of hearing the facts from Charlotte, and presently she knew a good deal. Charlotte had some prudence, but she thought she might tell their own cousin what half the neighbourhood knew—that Philip had suspected Guy falsely, and had made papa very angry with him; that the engagement had been broken off, and Guy had been banished, while all the time he was behaving most gloriously. Now it was all explained: but in spite of the fullest certainty, Philip would not be convinced, and wanted them to have waited five years.

Eveleen agreed with Charlotte that this was a great deal too bad, admired Guy, and pitied Amy to her heart’s content.

‘So, he was banished, regularly banished!’ said she. ‘However, of course Amy never gave him up.’

‘Oh, she never mistrusted him one minute.’

‘And while he had her fast, it was little he would care for the rest.’

‘Yes, if he had known it, but she could not tell him.’

Eveleen looked arch.

‘But I am sure she did not,’ said Charlotte, rather angrily.

‘You know nothing about it, my dear.’

‘Yes, but I do; for mamma said to Charlie how beautifully she did behave, and he too,—never attempting any intercourse.’

‘Very good of you to believe it.’

‘I am sure of it, certain sure,’ said Charlotte. ‘How could you venture to think they would either of them do anything wrong?’

‘I did not say they would.’

‘What, not to write to each other when papa had forbidden it, and do so in secret, too?’

‘My dear, don’t look so innocently irate. Goodness has nothing to do with it, it would be only a moderate constancy. You know nothing at all of lovers.’

‘If I know nothing of lovers, I know a great deal of Amy and Guy, and I am quite sure nothing on earth would tempt them to do anything in secret that they were forbidden.’

‘Wait till you are in love, and you’ll change your mind.’

‘I never mean to be in love,’ said Charlotte, indignantly. Eveleen laughed the more, Charlotte grew more angry and uncomfortable at the tone of the conversation, and was heartily glad that it was broken off by the entrance of the gentlemen. Guy helped Charles to the sofa, and then turned away to continue his endless talk on Redclyffe business with Markham. Charlotte flew up to the sofa, seized an interval when no one was in hearing, and kneeling down to bring her face on a level with her brother’s, whispered—‘Charlie, Eva won’t believe but that Guy and Amy kept up some intercourse last winter.’

‘I can’t help it, Charlotte.’

‘When I tell her they did not, she only laughs at me. Do tell her they did not.’

‘I have too much self-respect to lay myself open to ridicule.’

‘Charlie, you don’t think it possible yourself,’ exclaimed Charlotte, in consternation.

‘Possible—no indeed.’

‘She *will* say it is not wrong, and that I know nothing of lovers.’

‘You should have told her that ours are not

common-place lovers, but far beyond her small experience.

‘I wish I had! Tell her so, Charlie, she will believe you.’

‘I shan’t say one word about it.’

‘Why not?’

‘Because she is not worthy. If she can’t appreciate them, I would let her alone. I once thought better of Eva, but it is very bad company she keeps when she is not here.’

Charles, however, was not sorry when Eveleen came to sit by him, for a bantering conversation with her was the occupation of which he was most capable. Amy, returning, came and sat in her old place beside him, with her hand in his, and her quiet eyes fixed on the ground.

The last evening for many weeks that she would thus sit with him,—the last that she would ever be a part of his home. She had already ceased to belong entirely to him; she who had always been the most precious to him, except his mother.

Only his mother could have been a greater loss,—he could not dwell on the anticipation; and still holding her hand, he roused himself to listen, and answer gaily, to Eveleen’s description of the tutor, Mr. Fielder, ‘a thorough gentleman, very clever and agreeable, who had read all the books in the world; the ugliest, yes, without exaggeration, the most quaintly ugly man living,—little, and looking just as if he was made of gutta percha,’ Eveleen said, ‘always moving by jerks,—so Maurice advised the boys not to put him near the fire, lest he should melt.’

‘Only when he gives them some formidable lesson, and they want to melt his heart,’ said Charles, talking at random, in hopes of saying something laughable.

‘Then his eyes—’tis not exactly a squint, but a cast there is, and one set of eyelashes are black and the other light, and that gives him just the air of a little

frightful terrier of Maurice's, named Venus, with a black spot over one eye. The boys never call him anything but Venus.'

'And you encourage them in respect for their tutor?'

'Oh, he holds his own at lessons, I trow; but he pretends to have such a horror of us wild Irish, and to wonder not to find us eating potatoes with our fingers, and that I don't wear a petticoat over my head instead of a bonnet, in what he calls the classical Carthaginian-Celto-Hibernian fashion.'

'Dear me,' said Charlotte, 'no wonder Philip recommended him.'

'O, I assure you he has the gift, no one else but Captain Morville talks near as well.'

So talked on Eveleen, and Charles answered her as much in her own fashion as he could, and when at last the evening came to an end, everyone felt relieved.

Laura lingered long in Amy's room, perceiving that hitherto she had known only half the value of her sister, her sweet sister. It would be worse than ever now, when left with the others, all so much less sympathizing, all saying sharp things of Philip, none to cling to her with those winsome ways that had been unnoted till the time when they were no more to console her, and she felt them to have been the only charm that had softened her late dreary desolation.

So full was her heart, that she must have told Amy all her grief but for the part that Philip had acted towards Guy, and her doubts of Guy would not allow her the consolation of dwelling on Amy's happiness, which cheered the rest. She could only hang about her in speechless grief, and caress her fondly, while Amy cried, and tried to comfort her, till her mother came to wish her good-night.

Mrs. Edmonstone did not stay long, because she wished Amy, if possible, to rest.

‘Mamma,’ said Amy, as she received her last kiss, ‘I can’t think why I am not more unhappy.’

‘It is all as it should be, my dear,’ said Mrs. Edmonstone.

Amabel slept, and awakened to the knowledge that it was her wedding-day. She was not to appear at the first breakfast, but she came to meet Charles in the dressing-room; and as they sat together on the sofa, where she had watched and amused so many of his hours of helplessness, he clasped round her arm his gift,—a bracelet of his mother’s hair. His fingers trembled and his eyes were hazy, but he would not let her help him. Her thanks were obliged to be all kisses, no words would come but ‘Charlie, Charlie! how could I ever have promised to leave you?’

‘Nonsense! who ever dreamt that my sisters were to be three monkeys tied to a clog?’

It was impossible not to smile, though it was but for a moment,—Charles’s mirth was melancholy.

‘And, dear Charlie, you will not miss me so very much; do pray let Charlotte wait upon you.’

‘After the first, perhaps, I may not hate her. Oh, Amy, I little knew what I was doing when I tried to get him back again for you. I was sawing off the bough I was sitting on. But there! I will not flatter you, you’ve had enough to turn that head of yours. Stand up, and let me take a survey. Very pretty, I declare,—you do my education credit. There, if it will be for your peace, I’ll do my best to wear on without you. I’ve wanted a brother all my life, and you are giving me the very one I would have picked out of a thousand—the only one I could forgive for presuming to steal you, Amy. Here he is. Come in,’ he added, as Guy knocked at his door, to offer to help him down stairs.

Guy hardly spoke, and Amy could not look in his face. It was late, and he took down Charles at once. After this she had very little quiet, every one was buz-

zing about her, and putting the last touches to her dress ; at last, just as she was quite finished, Charlotte exclaimed, ' Oh, there is Guy's step ; may I call him in to have one look ?'

Mrs. Edmonstone did not say no ; and Charlotte, opening the dressing-room door, called to him. He stood opposite to Amy for some moments, then said, with a smile, ' I was wrong about the grogram ; I would not for anything see you look otherwise than you do.'

It seemed to Mrs. Edmonstone and Laura that these words made them lose sight of the details of lace and silk that had been occupying them, so that they only saw the radiance, purity, and innocence of Amy's bridal appearance. No more was said, for Mr. Edmonstone ran up to call Guy, who was to drive Charles in the pony-carriage.

Amabel, of course, went with her parents. Poor child ! her tears flowed freely on the way, and Mr. Edmonstone, now that it had really come to the point of parting with his little Amy, was very much overcome, while his wife, hardly refraining from tears, could only hold her daughter's hand very close.

The regular morning service was a great comfort, by restoring their tranquillity, and by the time it was ended, Amabel's countenance had settled into its own calm expression of trust and serenity. She scarcely even trembled when her father led her forward ; her hand did not shake, and her voice, though very low, was firm and audible ; while Guy's deep, sweet tones had a sort of thrill and quiver of intense feeling.

No one could help observing that Laura was the most agitated person present ; she trembled so much that she was obliged to lean on Charlotte, and her tears gave the infection to the other bridesmaids—all but Mary Ross, who could never cry when other people did, and little Marianne, who did nothing but look and wonder.

Mary was feeling a great deal, both of compassion

for the bereaved family and of affectionate admiring joy for the young pair who knelt before the altar. It was a showery day, with gleams of vivid sunshine, and one of these suddenly broke forth, casting a stream of colour from a martyr's figure in the south window, so as to shed a golden glory on the wave of brown hair over Guy's forehead, then passing on and tinting the bride's white veil with a deep glowing shade of crimson and purple.

Either that golden light, or the expression of the face on which it beamed, made Mary think of the lines—

Where is the brow to wear in mortal's sight,
The crown of pure angelic light?

Charles stood with his head leaning against a pillar as if he could not bear to look up; Mr. Edmonstone, was restless and almost sobbing; Mrs. Edmonstone alone collected, though much flushed and somewhat trembling, while the only person apparently free from excitement was the little bride, as there she knelt, her hand clasped in his, her head bent down, her modest, steadfast face looking as if she was only conscious of the vow she exchanged, the blessing she received; and was, as it were, lifted out of herself.

It was over now. The feast, in its fullest sense was held, and the richest of blessings had been called down on them.

The procession came out of the vestry in full order, and very pretty it was; the bride and bridegroom in the fresh bright graciousness of their extreme youth, and the six bridesmaids following; Laura and Lady Eveleen, two strikingly handsome and elegant girls; Charlotte, with the pretty little fair Marianne; Mary Ross, and Grace Harper. The village people who stood round might well say that such a sight as that was worth coming twenty miles to see.

The first care, after the bridal pair had driven off,

was to put Charles into his pony-carriage. Charlotte, who had just pinned on his favour, begged to drive him, for she meant to make him her especial charge, and to succeed to all Amy's rights. Mrs. Edmonstone asked whether Laura would not prefer going with him, but she hastily answered, 'No, thank you, let Charlotte;' for with her troubled feelings, she could better answer talking girls than parry the remarks of her shrewd, observant brother.

Some one said it would rain, but Charlotte still pleaded earnestly.

'Come, then, puss,' said Charles, rallying his spirits, 'only don't upset me, or it will spoil their tour.'

Charlotte drove off with elaborate care,—then came a deep sigh, and she exclaimed, 'Well! he is our brother, and all is safe.'

'Yes,' said Charles; 'no more fears for them.'

'Had you any? I am very glad if you had.'

'Why?'

'Because it was so like a book. I had a sort of feeling, all the time, that Philip would come in quite grand and terrible.'

'As if he must act Ogre. I am not sure that I had not something of the same notion,—that he might appear suddenly, and forbid the banns, entirely for Amy's sake, and as the greatest kindness to her.'

'Oh!'

'However, he can't separate them now, let him do his worst; and while Amy is Guy's wife, I don't think we shall easily be made to quarrel. I am glad the knot is tied, for I had a fatality notion that the feud was so strong, that it was nearly a case of the mountains bending and the streams ascending, ere she was to be our foeman's bride.'

'No,' said Charlotte, 'it ought to be like that story of Rosaura and her kindred, don't you remember? The fate would not be appeased by the marriage, till Count Julius had saved the life of one of the hostile race.'

That would be *it*,—perhaps they will meet abroad, and Guy will *do it*.'

'That won't do. Philip will never endanger his precious life, nor ever forgive Guy the obligation. Well, I suppose there never was a prettier wedding—how silly of me to say so, I shall be sick of hearing it before night.'

'I do wish all these people were gone; I did not know it would be so horrid. I should like to shut myself up and cry, and think what I could ever do to wait on you. Indeed, Charlie, I know I never can be like Amy, but if you—'

'Be anything but sentimental, I don't want to make a fool of myself,' said Charles, with a smile and tone as if he was keeping sorrow at bay. 'Depend upon it if we were left to ourselves this evening, we should be so desperately savage that we should quarrel furiously, and there would be no Amy to set us to rights.'

'How Aunt Charlotte did cry! What a funny little woman she is.'

'Yes, I see now who you take after, puss. You'll be just like her, when you are her age.'

'So I mean to be,—I mean to stay and take care of you all my life, as she does of grandmamma.'

'You do, do you?'

'Yes, I never mean to marry, it is so disagreeable. O dear! But how lovely dear Amy did look.'

'Here's the rain!' exclaimed Charles, as some large drops began to fall in good time to prevent them from being either savage or sentimental, though at the expense of Charlotte's pink and white; for they had no umbrella, and she would not accept a share of Charles's carriage-cloak. She laughed, and drove on fast through the short cut, and arrived at the house-door just as the pelting hail was over, having battered her thin sleeves, and made her white bonnet look very deplorable. The first thing they saw was Guy, with Bustle close to him, for Bustle had found out that something

was going on that concerned his master, and followed him about more assiduously than ever, as if sensible of the decree, that he was to be left behind to Charlotte's care.

‘Charlotte, how wet you are.’

‘Never mind, Charlie is not.’ She sprung out, holding his hand, and felt as if she could never forget that moment when her new brother first kissed her brow.

‘Where's Amy?’

‘Here!’ and while Guy lifted Charles out, Charlotte was clasped in her sister's arms.’

‘Are you wet, Charlie?’

‘No, Charlotte would not be wise, and made me keep the cloak to myself.’

‘You are wet through, poor child; come up at once, and change,’ said Amy, flying nimbly up the stairs,—up even to Charlotte's own room, the old nursery, and there she was unfastening the drenched finery.

‘O Amy, don't do all this. Let me ring.’

‘No, the servants are either not come home or too busy, Charles won't want me, he has Guy. Can I find your white frock?’

‘Oh, but Amy—let me see!’ Charlotte made prisoner the left hand, and looked up with an arch smile at the face where she had called up a blush. ‘Lady Morville must not begin by being lady's-maid.’

‘Let me—let me, Charlotte, dear, I shan't be able to do anything for you this long time.’ Amy's voice trembled, and Charlotte held her fast to kiss her again.

‘We must make haste,’ said Amy, recovering herself. ‘There are the carriages.’

While the frock was being fastened, Charlotte looked into the Prayer-book Amy had laid down. There was the name, Amabel Frances Morville, and the date.

‘Has he just written it?’ said Charlotte.

‘Yes; when we came home.’

'O Amy! dear, dear Amy; I don't know whether I am glad or sorry!'

'I believe I am both,' said Amy.

At that moment Mrs. Edmonstone and Laura hastened in. Then was the time for broken words, tears, and smiles, as Amy leant against her mother, who locked her in a close embrace, and gazed on her in a sort of trance, at once of maternal pride and of pain, at giving up her cherished nestling. Poor Laura! how bitter were her tears, and how forced her smiles,—far unlike the rest!

No one would care to hear the details of the breakfast, and the splendours of the cake; how Charlotte recovered her spirits while distributing the favours; and Lady Eveleen set up a flirtation with Markham, and forced him into wearing one, though he protested, with many a grunt, that she was making a queer fool of him; how often Charles was obliged to hear it had been a pretty wedding; and how well Lord Kilcoran made his speech proposing the health of Sir Guy and Lady Morville. All the time, Laura was active and useful,—feeling as if she was acting a play, sustaining the character of Miss Edmonstone, the bridesmaid at her sister's happy marriage; while the true Laura, Philip's Laura, was lonely, dejected, wretched; half fearing for her sister, half jealous of her happiness, forced into pageantry with an aching heart,—with only one wish, that it was over, and that she might be again alone with her burden.

She was glad when her mother rose, and the ladies moved into the drawing-room,—glad to escape from Eveleen's quick eye, and to avoid Mary's clear sense,—glad to talk to comparative strangers,—glad of the occupation of going to prepare Amabel for her journey. This lasted a long time,—there was so much to be said, and hearts were so full, and Amy over again explained to Charlotte how to perform all the little services to Charles which she relinquished; while her mother had so many affectionate last words, and every now and

then stopped short to look at her little daughter, saying, she did not know if it was not a dream.

At length Amabel was dressed in her purple and white shot silk, her muslin mantle, and white bonnet. Mrs. Edmonstone left her and Laura to have a few words together, and went to the dressing-room. There she found Guy, leaning on the mantel-shelf, as he used to do when he brought his troubles to her. He started as she entered.

‘Ought I not to be here?’ he said. ‘I could not help coming once more. This room has always been the kernel of my home, my happiness here.’

‘Indeed, it has been a very great pleasure to have you here.’

‘You have been very kind to me,’ he proceeded, in a low, reflecting tone. ‘You have helped me very much, very often; even when— Do you remember the day I begged you to keep me in order, as if I were Charles? I did not think then—’

He was silent; and Mrs. Edmonstone, little able to find words, smiling, tried to say,—‘I little thought how truly and how gladly I should be able to call you my son;’ and ended by giving him a mother’s kiss.

‘I wish I could tell you half,’ said Guy,—‘half what I feel for the kindness that made a home to one who had no right to any. Coming as a stranger, I found—’

‘We found one to love with all our hearts,’ said Mrs. Edmonstone. ‘I have often looked back, and seen that you brought a brightness to us all—especially to poor Charles. Yes; it dates from your coming; and I can only wish and trust, Guy, that the same brightness will rest on your own home.’

‘There must be brightness where she is,’ said Guy.

‘I need not tell you to take care of her,’ said Mrs. Edmonstone, smiling. ‘I think I can trust you; but I feel rather as I did when first I sent her and Laura to a party of pleasure by themselves.’

Laura at this moment came in. Alone with Amy,

she could not speak, she could only cry; and, fearful of distressing her sister, she came away; but here, with Guy, it was worse, for it was unkind not to speak one warm word to him. Yet what could she say? He spoke first—

‘Laura, you must get up your looks again, now this turmoil is over. Don’t do too much mathematics, and wear yourself down to a shadow.’

Laura gave her sad, forced smile.

‘Will you do one thing for me, Laura? I should like to have one of your perspective views of the inside of the church. Would it be too troublesome to do?’

‘Oh, no; I shall be very glad.’

‘Don’t set about it till you quite like it, and have plenty of time. Thank you. I shall think it is a proof that you can forgive me for all the pain I am causing you. I am very sorry, indeed—’

‘You are so very kind,’ said Laura, bursting into tears; and, as her mother was gone, she could not help adding, ‘but don’t try to comfort me, Guy; don’t blame yourself,—’tisn’t only that,—but I am so very, very unhappy.’

‘Amy told me you were grieved for Philip. I wish I could help it, Laura. I want to try to meet him in Switzerland; and, if we can, perhaps it may be set right. At any rate, he will be glad to know you see the rights of it.’

Laura wept still more; but she could never again lose the sisterly feeling those kind words had awakened. If Philip had but known what he missed!

Charlotte ran in. ‘Oh, I am glad to find you here, Guy; I wanted to put you in mind of your promise. You must write me the first letter you sign ‘Your affectionate brother!’’

‘I won’t forget, Charlotte.’

‘Guy! Where’s Guy?’ called Mr. Edmonstone. ‘The rain’s going off. You must come down, both of you, or you’ll be too late.’

Mrs. Edmonstone hastened to call Amabel. Those moments that she had been alone, Amabel had been kneeling in an earnest supplication that all might be forgiven that she had done amiss in the home of her childhood; that the blessings might be sealed on her and her husband; and that she might go forth from her father's house in strength sent from above. Her mother summoned her; she rose, came calmly forth, met Guy at the head of the stairs, put her arm in his, and they went down.

Charles was on the sofa in the ante-room, talking fast, and striving for high spirits. 'Amy, woman, you do us credit! Well, write soon, and don't break your heart for want of me.'

There was a confusion of good-byes, and then all came out to the hall door; even Charles, with Charlotte's arm. One more of those fast-locked embraces between the brother and sister, and Mr. Edmonstone put Amabel into the carriage.

'Good bye, good bye, my own dearest little one! Bless you, bless you! and may you be as happy as a Mayflower! Guy, good bye. I've given you the best I had to give,—and 'tis you that are welcome to her. Take care what you do with her, for she's a precious little jewel! Good bye, my boy!'

Guy's face and grasping hand were the reply. As he was about to spring into the carriage, he turned again. 'Charlotte, I have shut Bustle up in my room. Will you let him out in half an hour? I've explained it all to him, and he will be very good. Good bye.'

'I'll take care of him. I'll mention him in every letter.'

'And, Markham, mind, if our house is not ready by Michaelmas, we shall be obliged to come and stay with you.'

'Grunt!'

Lastly, as if he could not help it, Guy dashed up the

step once more, pressed Charles's hand, and said, 'God bless you, Charlie!'

In an instant he was beside Amabel, and they drove off,—Amabel leaning forward, and gazing wistfully at her mother and Charles, till she was startled by a long cluster of laburnums, their yellow bloom bent down and heavy with wet, so that the ends dashed against her bonnet, and the crystal drops fell on her lap.

'Why, Amy, the Hollywell flowers are weeping for the loss of you!'

She gave a sweet, sunny smile through her tears. At that moment they came beyond the thick embowering shrubs, while full before them was the dark receding cloud, on which the sunbeams were painting a wide spanned rainbow. The semicircle was perfect, and full before them, like an arch of triumph under which they were to pass.

'How beautiful!' broke from them both.

'Guy,' said the bride, after a few minutes had faded the rainbow, and turned them from its sight, 'shall I tell you what I was thinking? I was thinking, that if there is a doom on us, I am not afraid, if it will only bring a rainbow.'

'The rainbow will come after, if not with it,' said Guy.

CHAPTER VIII.

She's a winsome wee thing,
She's a handsome wee thing,
She's a bonnie wee thing,
This sweet wee wifie of mine.

BURNS.

‘**L**OOK here, Amy,’ said Guy, pointing to a name in the travellers’ book at Altdorf.

‘Captain Morville!’ she exclaimed, ‘July 14th. That was only the day before yesterday.’

‘I wonder whether we shall overtake him! Do you know what was this gentleman’s route?’ inquired Guy, in French that was daily becoming more producible.

The gentleman having come on foot, with nothing but his knapsack, had not made much sensation. There was a vague idea that he had gone on to the St. Gotthard; but the guide, who was likely to know, was not forthcoming, and all Guy’s inquiries only resulted in, ‘I dare say we shall hear of him elsewhere.’

To tell the truth, Amabel was not much disappointed; and she could see, though he said nothing, that Guy was not very sorry. These two months had been so very happy, there had been such full enjoyment, such freedom from care and vexation, or aught that could for a moment ruffle the stream of delight. Scenery, cathedrals, music, paintings, historical association, had in turn given unceasing interest and pleasure; and, above all, Amabel had been growing more and more into the depths of her husband’s mind, and entering into the

grave, noble thoughts inspired by the scenes they were visiting. It had been a sort of ideal happiness, so exquisite, that she could hardly believe it real. A taste of society, which they had at Munich, though very pleasant, had only made them more glad to be alone together again; any companion would have been an interruption; and Philip, so intimate, yet with his carping, persecuting spirit towards Guy, was one of the last persons she could wish to meet; but knowing that this was by no means a disposition Guy wished to encourage, she held her peace.

For the present, no more was said about Philip; and they proceeded to Interlachen, where they spent a day or two, while Arnaud was with his relations; and they visited the two beautiful lakes of Thun and Brienz. On first coming among mountains, Amabel had been greatly afraid of the precipices, and had been very much alarmed at the way in which Guy clambered about, with a sureness of foot and steadiness of head acquired long ago on the crags of Redclyffe, and on which the guides were always complimenting him; but from seeing him always come down safe, and from having been enticed by him to several heights, which had at first seemed to her most dizzy and dangerous, she had gradually laid aside her fears, and even become slightly, very slightly, adventurous herself.

One beautiful evening, they were wandering on the side of the Beatenberg, in the little narrow paths traced by the tread of the goats and their herdsmen. Amabel sat down to try to sketch the outline of the white-capped Jung Frau and her attendant mountains, wishing she could draw as well as Laura, but intending her outline to aid in describing the scene to those whose eyes she longed to have with her. While she was drawing, Guy began to climb higher, and was soon out of sight, though she still heard him whistling. The mountains were not easy to draw, or rather she grew discontented with her black lines and white paper, compared with the dazzling snow against the blue sky,

tinged by the roseate tints of the setting sun, and the dark fissures on the rocky sides, still blacker from the contrast.

She put up her sketching materials, and began to gather some of the delightful treasury of mountain flowers. A gentle slope of grass was close to her, and on it grew, at some little distance from her, a tuft of deep purple, the beautiful Alpine saxifrage, which she well knew by description. She went to gather it, but the turf was slippery, and, when once descending, she could not stop herself; and what was the horror of finding herself half slipping, half running down a slope, which became steeper every moment, till it was suddenly broken off into a sheer precipice! She screamed, and grasped with both hands at some low bushes, that grew under a rock at the side of the treacherous turf. She caught a branch, and found herself supported, by clinging to it with her hands, while she rested on the slope, now so nearly perpendicular, that to lose her hold would send her instantly down the precipice. Her whole weight seemed to depend on that slender bough, and those little hands that clenched it convulsively,—her feet felt in vain for some hold. ‘Guy! Guy!’ she shrieked again. Oh, where was he? His whistle ceased,—he had heard her,—he called.

‘Here!’

‘Oh, help me!’ she answered. But with that moment’s joy came the horror, he could not help her—he would only fall himself. ‘Take care! don’t come on the grass!’ she cried. She must let go the branch in a short time, then a slip, the precipice,—and what would become of him? Those moments were hours.

‘I am coming—hold fast!’ She heard his voice above her, very near. To find him so close made the agony of dread and of prayer even more intense. To be lost, with her husband scarcely a step from her! Yet how could he stand on the slippery turf, and so as to be steady enough to raise her up?

‘Now then!’ he said, speaking from the rock under

which the brushwood grew, 'I cannot reach you unless you raise up your hand to me—your left hand—straight up. Let go. Now!'

It was a fearful moment. Amabel could not see him, and felt as if relinquishing her grasp of the tree was certain destruction. The instinct of self-preservation had been making her cling desperately with that left hand, especially as it held by the thicker part of the bough. But the habit of implicit confidence and obedience was stronger still; she did not hesitate, and tightening her hold with the other hand, she unclasped the left, and stretched it upwards.

Joy unspeakable to feel his fingers close over her wrist, like iron, even while the bush to which she had trusted was detaching itself, almost uprooted by her weight! If she had waited a second she would have been lost, but her confidence had been her safety. A moment or two more, and with closed eyes she was leaning against him; his arm was round her, and he guided her steps, till, breathless, she found herself on the broad well-trodden path, out of sight of the precipice.

'Thank heaven!' he said, in a very low voice, as he stood still. 'Thank God! my Amy, I have you still.'

She looked up, and saw how pale he was, though his voice had been so steady throughout. She leant on his breast, and rested her head on his shoulder again in silence, for her heart was too full of awe and thankfulness for words, even had she not been without breath or power to speak, and needing his support in her giddiness and trembling.

More than a minute passed thus. Then, beginning to recover, she looked up to him again, and said, 'Oh! it was dreadful! I did not think you could have saved me.'

'I thought so too for a moment!' said Guy, in a stifled voice. 'You are better now? You are not hurt? are you sure?'

'Quite sure! I did not fall, you know, only

slipped. No, I have nothing the matter with me, thank you.'

She tried to stand alone, but the trembling returned. He made her sit down, and she rested against him, while he still made her assure him that she was unhurt. 'Yes, quite unhurt—quite well; only this wrist is a little strained, and no wonder. Oh, I am sure it was a Providence that made those bushes grow just there!'

'How did it happen?'

'It was my fault. I went after a flower; my foot slipped on the turf, and I could not stop myself. I thought I should have run right down the precipice!'

She shut her eyes, and shuddered again. 'It was frightful!' he said, holding her fast. 'It was a great mercy indeed! Thank Heaven, it is over! You are not giddy now?'

'Oh, no; not at all!'

'And your wrist!'

'Oh, that's nothing. I only told you to show you what was the worst,' said Amy, smiling with recovered playfulness, the most re-assuring of all.

'What flower was it?'

'A piece of purple saxifrage. I thought there was no danger, for it did not seem steep at first.'

'No; it was not your fault. You had better not move just yet; sit still a little while.'

'O Guy, where are you going!'

'Only for your sketching tools and my stick. I shall not be gone an instant. Sit still and recover.'

In a few seconds he came back with her basket, and in it a few of the flowers. 'Oh, I am sorry,' she said, coming to meet him; 'I wish I had told you I did not care for them. Why did you?'

'I did not put myself in any peril about them. I had my trusty staff, you know.'

'I am glad I did not guess what you were doing. I thought it so impossible, that I did not think of begging you not. I shall keep them always. It is a

good thing for us to be put in mind how frail all our joy is.'

'All?' asked Guy, scarcely as if replying to her, while, though his arm pressed hers, his eye was on the blue sky, as he answered himself, 'Your joy no man taketh from you.'

Amabel was much impressed, as she thought what it would have been for him if his little wife had been snatched from him so suddenly and frightfully. His return—his meeting her mother—his desolate home and solitary life. She could almost have wept for him. Yet, at the moment of relief from the fear of such misery, he could thus speak. He could look onward to the joy beyond, even while his cheek was still blanched with the horror and anguish of the apprehension; and how great they had been was shown by the broken words he uttered in his sleep, for several nights afterwards, while by day he was always watching and cautioning her. Assuredly his dependence on the joy that could not be lost did not make her doubt his tenderness; it only made her feel how far behind him she was, for would it have been the same with her, had the danger been his?

In a couple of days they arrived at the beautiful Lugano, and, as usual, their first walk was to the post-office, but disappointment awaited them. There had been some letters addressed to the name of Morville, but the Signor Inglese had left orders that such should be forwarded to Como. Amabel, in her best Italian, strove hard to explain the difference between the Captain and Sir Guy, the Cavaliere Guido, as she translated him, who stood by looking much amused by the perplexities of his lady's construing; while the post-master, though very polite and sorry for the Signora's disappointment, stuck to the address being Morville, *poste restante*.

'There is one good thing,' said the cavaliere, as they walked away, 'we can find the captain now. I'll write

and ask him—shall I say to meet us at Varena or at Bellagio?’

‘Whichever suits him best, I should think. It can’t make much difference to us.’

‘Your voice has a disconsolate cadence,’ said Guy, looking at her with a smile.

‘I did not mean it,’ she answered; ‘I have not a word to say against it. It is quite right, and I am sure I don’t wish to do otherwise.’

‘Only it is the first drawback in our real day-dream.’

‘Just so, and that is all,’ said Amy; ‘I am glad you feel the same, not that I want you to change your mind.’

‘Don’t you remember our resolution against mere pleasure-hunting? That adventure at Interlachen seemed to be meant to bring us up short just as we were getting into that line.’

‘You think we were?’

‘I was, at least; for I know it was a satisfaction not to find a letter, to say Redclyffe was ready for us.’

‘I had rather it was Redclyffe than Philip.’

‘To be sure, I would not change my own dancing leaping waves for this clear blue looking-glass of a lake, or even those white peaks. I want you to make friends with those waves, Amy. But it is a more real matter to make friends with Philip, the one wish of my life. Not that I exactly expect to clear matters up, but if some move is not made now, when it may, we shall stand aloof for life, and there will be the feud where it was before.’

‘It is quite right,’ said Amy; ‘I dare say that, meeting so far from home, he will be glad to see us, and to hear the Hollywell news. I little thought last autumn where I should meet him again.’

On the second evening from that time, Philip Morville was walking, hot and dusty, between the high stone walls bordering the road, and shutting out the

beautiful view of the lake, at the entrance of Bellagio, meditating on the note he had received from Guy, and intending to be magnanimous, and overlook former offences for Amabel's sake. He would show that he considered the marriage to have cleared off old scores, and that as long as she was happy, poor little thing, her husband should be borne with, though not to the extent of the spoiling the Edmonstones gave him.

Thus reflecting, he entered the town, and walked on in search of the hotel. He presently found himself on a terrace, looking out on the deep blue lake, there divided by the promontory of Bellagio into two branches, the magnificent mountain forms rising opposite to him. A little boat was crossing, and as it neared the landing-place, he saw that it contained a gentleman and lady, English—probably his cousins themselves. They looked up, and in another moment had waved their recognition. Gestures and faces were strangely familiar, like a bit of Holywell transplanted into that Italian scene. He hastened to the landing-place, and was met by a hearty greeting from Guy, who seemed full of eagerness to claim their closer relationship, and ready to be congratulated.

‘How d’ye do, Philip? I am glad we have caught you at last. Here she is.’

If he had wished to annoy Philip, he could hardly have done so more effectually than by behaving as if nothing was amiss, and disconcerting his preparations for a reconciliation. But the captain’s ordinary manner was calculated to cover all such feelings; and as he shook hands, he felt much kindness for Amabel, as an unconscious victim, whose very smiles were melancholy, and plenty of them there were, for she rejoiced sincerely in the meeting, as Guy was pleased, and a home face was a welcome sight.

‘I have your letters in my knapsack; I will unpack them as soon as we get to the hotel. I thought it safer not to send them in search of you again, as we were to meet so soon.’

‘Certainly. Are there many?’

‘One for each of you, both from Hollywell. I was very sorry to have engrossed them; but not knowing you were so near, I only gave my surname.’

‘It was lucky for us,’ said Guy, ‘otherwise we could not have traced you. We saw your name at Altdorf, and have been trying to come up with you ever since.’

‘I am glad we have met. What accounts have you from home?’

‘Excellent,’ said Amy; ‘Charlie is uncommonly well, he has been out of doors a great deal, and has even dined out several times.’

‘I am very glad.’

‘You know he has been improving ever since his great illness.’

‘You would be surprised to see how much better he moves,’ said Guy, ‘he helps himself so much more.’

‘Can he set his foot to the ground?’

‘No,’ said Amy, ‘there is no hope of that; but he is more active, because his general health is improved; he can sleep and eat more.’

‘I always thought exertion would do more for him than anything else.’

Amabel was vexed, for she thought exertion depended more on health, than health on exertion; besides, she thought Philip ought to take some blame to himself, for the disaster on the stairs. She made no answer, and Guy asked what Philip had been doing to-day.

‘Walking over the hills from Como. Do you always travel in this fashion, *impedimentis relictis*?’

‘Not exactly,’ said Guy; ‘the *impedimenta* are, some at Varenna, some at the inn with Arnaud.’

‘So you have Arnaud with you?’

‘Yes, and Anne Trower,’ said Amy, for her maid was a Stylehurst person, who had lived at Hollywell ever since she had been fit for service. ‘She was greatly pleased to hear we were going to meet the captain.’

‘We amuse ourselves with thinking how she gets on

with Arnaud,' said Guy. 'Their introduction took place only two days before we were married, since which, they have had one continued *tête-à-tête*, which must have been droll at first.

'More so at last,' said Amy. 'At first Anne thought Mr. Arnaud so fine a gentleman, that she hardly dared to speak to him. I believe nothing awed her so much as his extreme courtesy: but lately, he has been quite fatherly to her, and took her to dine at his sister's chalet, where I would have given something to see her. She tells me he wants her to admire the country, but she does not like the snow, and misses our beautiful clover-fields very much.'

'Stylehurst ought to have been better training for mountains,' said Philip.

They were fast losing the stiffness of first meeting. Philip could not but acknowledge to himself that Amy was looking very well, and so happy that Guy must be fulfilling the condition on which he was to be borne with. However, these were early days, and of course Guy must be kind to her at least in the honeymoon, before the wear and tear of life began. They both looked so young, that having advised them to wait four years, he was ready to charge them with youthfulness, if not as a fault, at least as a folly; indeed, the state of his own affairs made him inclined to think it a foible, almost a want of patience, in any one to marry before thirty. It was a conflict of feeling. Guy was so cordial and good-humoured, that he could not help being almost gained; but, on the other hand, he had always thought Guy's manners eminently agreeable; and as happiness always made people good-humoured, this was no reason for relying on him. Besides, the present ease and openness of manner might only result from security.

Other circumstances combined, more than the captain imagined, in what is popularly called putting him out. He had always been hitherto on equal terms with Guy; indeed, had rather the superiority at Hollywell,

from his age and assumption of character, but here Sir Guy was somebody, the captain nobody, and even the advantage of age was lost, now that Guy was married and head of a family, while Philip was a stray young man and his guest. Far above such considerations as he thought himself, and deeming them only the tokens of the mammon worship of the time, Philip, nevertheless, did not like to be secondary to one to whom he had always been preferred; and this, and perhaps the being half ashamed of it, made him something more approaching to cross than ever before; but now and then, the persevering amiability of both would soften him, and restore him to his most gracious mood.

He gave them their letters when they reached the inn, feeling as if he had a better right than they, to one which was in Laura's writing, and when left in solitary possession of the sitting-room—a very pleasant one, with windows opening on the terrace just above the water—paced up and down, chafing at his own perplexity of feeling.

Presently they came back; Guy sat down to continue their joint journal-like letter to Charles, while Amabel made an orderly arrangement of their properties, making the most of their few books, and taking out her work as if she had been at home. Philip looked at the books.

‘Have you a *Childe Harold* here?’ said he. ‘I want to look at something in it.’

‘No, we have not.’

‘Guy, you never forget poetry; I dare say you can help me out with those stanzas about the mists in the valley.’

‘I have never read it,’ said Guy. ‘Don’t you remember warning me against Byron?’

‘You did not think that was for life! Besides,’ he continued, feeling this reply inconsistent with his contempt for Guy’s youth, ‘that applied to his perversions of human passions, not to his descriptions of scenery.’

‘I think,’ said Guy, looking up from his letter, ‘I

should be more unwilling to take a man like that to interpret nature than anything else, except Scripture. It is more profane to attempt it.'

'I see what you mean,' said Amabel, thoughtfully.

'More than I do,' said Philip. 'I never supposed you would take my advice *au pied de la lettre*,' he had almost added, 'perversely.'

'I have felt my obligations for that caution ever since I have come to some knowledge of what Byron was,' said Guy.

'The fascination of his *Giaour* heroes has an evil influence on some minds,' said Philip. 'I think you do well to avoid it. The half truth, resulting from its being the effect of self-contemplation, makes it more dangerous.'

'True,' said Guy, though he little knew how much he owed to having attended to that caution; for who could have told where the mastery might have been in the period of fearful conflict with his passions, if he had been feeding his imagination with the contemplation of revenge, dark hatred, and malice, and identifying himself with Byron's brooding and lowering heroes?

'But,' continued Philip, 'I cannot see why you should shun the fine descriptions which are almost classical—the Bridge of Sighs, the Gladiator.'

'He may describe the gladiator as much as he pleases,' said Guy; 'indeed there is something noble in that indignant line—

Butchered to make a Roman holiday;

but that is not like his meddling with these mountains or the sea.'

'Fine description is the point in both. You are over-drawing.'

'My notion is this,' said Guy,—'there is danger in listening to a man who is sure to misunderstand the voice of nature,—danger, lest by filling our ears with the wrong voice we should close them to the true one. I should think there was a great chance of being led to

stop short at the material beauty, or worse, to link human passions with the glories of nature, and so distort, defile, profane them.'

'You have never read the poem, so you cannot judge,' said Philip, thinking this extremely fanciful and ultra-fastidious. 'Your rule would exclude all descriptive poetry, unless it was written by angels, I suppose?'

'No; by men with minds in the right direction.'

'Very little you would leave us.'

'I don't think so,' said Amabel. 'Almost all the poetry we really care about was written by such men.'

'Shakespeare, for instance?'

'No one can doubt of the bent of his mind from the whole strain of his writings,' said Guy. 'So again with Spenser; and as to Milton, though his religion was not quite the right sort, no one can pretend to say he had it not. Wordsworth, Scott——'

'Scott?' said Philip.

'Including the descriptions of scenery in his novels,' said Amy, 'where, I am sure, there is the spirit and the beauty.'

'Or rather, the spirit is the beauty,' said Guy.

'There is a good deal in what you say,' answered Philip, who would not lay himself open to the accusation of being uncandid; 'but you will forgive me for thinking it rather too deep an explanation of the grounds of not making *Childe Harold* a handbook for Italy, like other people.'

Amabel thought this so dogged and provoking, that she was out of patience; but Guy only laughed, and said, 'Rather so, considering that the fact was that we never thought of it.'

There were times when, as Philip had once said, good temper annoyed him more than anything, and perhaps he was unconsciously disappointed at having lost his old power of fretting and irritating Guy, and watching him champ the bit, so as to justify his own opinion of him. Every proceeding of his cousins seemed to give him annoyance, more especially their being at home

together, and Guy's seeming to belong more to Hollywell than himself. He sat by, with a book, and watched them, as Guy asked for Laura's letter, and Amy came to look over his half-finished answer, laughing over it, and giving her commands and messages, looking so full of playfulness and happiness, as she stood with one hand on the back of her husband's chair, and the other holding the letter, and Guy watching her amused face, and answering her remarks with lively words and bright smiles. 'People who looked no deeper than the surface would say, what a well-matched pair,' thought Philip; 'and no doubt they were very happy, poor young things, if it would but last.' Here Guy turned, and asked him a question about the line of perpetual snow, so much in his own style, that he was almost ready to accuse them of laughing at him. Next came what hurt him most of all, as they talked over Charles's letter, and a few words passed about Laura, and the admiration of some person she had met at Allonby. The whole world was welcome to admire her; nothing could injure his hold on her heart; and no joke of Charles could shake his confidence; but it was hard that he should be forced to hear such things, and ask no questions, for they evidently thought him occupied with his book, and did not intend him to listen. The next thing, they said, however, obliged him to show that he was attending, for it was about her being better.

'Who? Laura!' he said, in a tone that, in spite of himself, had a startled sound. 'You did not say she had been ill?'

'No, she has not,' said Amy. 'Dr. Mayerne said there was nothing really the matter; but she has been worried and out of spirits lately; and mamma thought it would be good for her to go out more.'

Philip would not let himself sigh, in spite of the oppressing consciousness of having brought the cloud over her, and of his own inability to do aught but leave her to endure it in silence and patience. Alas! for how long? Obligated, meanwhile, to see these young creatures,

placed, by the mere fictitious circumstance of wealth, in possession of happiness which they had not had time either to earn or to appreciate. He thought it shallow, because of their mirth and gaiety, as if they were only seeking food for laughter, finding it in mistakes, for which he was ready to despise them.

Arnaud had brought rather antiquated notions to the renewal of his office as a courier: his mind had hardly opened to railroads and steamers, and changes had come over hotels since his time. Guy and Amabel, both young and healthy, caring little about bad dinners, and unwilling to tease the old man by complaints, or alterations of his arrangements, had troubled themselves little about the matter; took things as they found them, ate dry bread when the cookery was bad, walked if the road was 'shocking;' went away the sooner, if the inns were 'intolerable;' made merry over every inconvenience, and turned it into an excellent story for Charles. They did not even distress themselves about sights which they had missed seeing.

Philip thought all this very foolish and absurd, showing that they were unfit to take care of themselves, and that Guy was neglectful of his wife's comforts: in short, establishing his original opinion of their youth and folly.

So passed the first evening; perhaps the worse because, besides what he had heard about Laura, he had been somewhat over-fatigued by various hot days' walks.

Certain it is, that next morning he was not nearly so much inclined to be displeased with them for laughing, when, in speaking to Anne, he inadvertently called her mistress Miss Amabel.

'Never mind,' said Amy, as Anne departed—and he looked disconcerted, as a precise man always does when catching himself in a mistake—'Anne is used to it; Guy is always doing it, and puzzles poor Arnaud sorely by sending him for Miss Amabel's parasol.'

'And the other day,' said Guy, 'when Thorndale's

brother, at Munich, inquired after Lady Morville, I had to consider who she was.'

'Oh! you saw Thorndale's brother, did you?'

'Yes; he was very obliging. Guy had to go to him about our passports; and when he found who we were, he brought his wife to call on us, and asked us to an evening party.'

'Did you go?'

'Guy thought we must, and it was very entertaining. We had a curious adventure there. In the morning, we had been looking at those beautiful windows of the great church, when I turned round, and saw a gentleman—an Englishman—gazing with all his might at Guy. We met him again in the evening, and presently Mr. Thorndale came and told us it was Mr. Shene.'

'Shene, the painter?'

'Yes. He had been very much struck with Guy's face: it was exactly what he wanted for a picture he was about, and he wished of all things just to be allowed to make a sketch.'

'Did you submit?'

'Yes,' said Guy, 'and we were rewarded. I never saw a more agreeable person, or one who gave so entirely the impression of genius. The next day he took us through the gallery, and showed us all that was worth admiring.'

'And in what character is he to make you appear?'

'That is the strange part of it,' said Amabel. 'Don't you remember how Guy once puzzled us by choosing Sir Galahad for his favourite hero. It is that very Sir Galahad, when he kneels to adore the Saint Greal. Mr. Shene said he had long been dreaming over it, and at last, as he saw Guy's face looking upwards, it struck him that it was just what he wanted: it would be worth anything to him to catch the expression.'

'I wonder what I was looking like!' ejaculated Guy.

'Did he take you as yourself, or as Sir Galahad?'

'As myself, happily.'

'How did he succeed?'

‘Amy likes it; but decidedly I should never have known myself.’

‘Ah,’ said his wife—

‘Could some fay the giftie gie us,
To see oursels as others see us.’

‘As far as the sun-burnt visage is concerned, the glass does that every morning.’

‘Yes, but *you* don’t look at yourself exactly as you do at a painted window,’ said Amy, in her demure way.

‘I cannot think how you found time for sitting!’ said Philip.

‘O, it is quite a little thing, a mere sketch, done in two evenings and half an hour in the morning. He promises it to me when he has done with Sir Galahad,’ said Amy.

‘Two—three evenings. You must have been a long time at Munich.’

‘A fortnight,’ said Guy; ‘there is a great deal to see there.’

Philip did not quite understand this, nor did he think it very satisfactory that they should thus have lingered in a gay town, but he meant to make the best of them to-day, and returned to his usual fashion of patronizing and laying down the law. They were so used to this that they did not care about it; indeed, they had reckoned on it as the most amiable conduct to be expected on his part.

The day was chiefly spent in an excursion on the lake, landing at the most beautiful spots, walking a little way and admiring, or while in the boat, smoothly moving over the deep blue waters, gaining lovely views of the banks, and talking over the book with which their acquaintance had begun, *I Promessi Sposi*. Never did tourists spend a more serene and pleasant day.

On comparing notes as to their plans, it appeared that each party had about a week or ten days to spare; the captain before he must embark for Corfu, and

Sir Guy and Lady Morville before the time they had fixed for returning home. Guy proposed to go together somewhere, spare the post-office further blunders, and get the Signor Capitano to be their interpreter. Philip thought it would be an excellent thing for his young cousins for him to take charge of them, and show them how people ought to travel; so out came his little pocket map, marked with his route, before he left Ireland, whereas they seemed to have no fixed object, but to be always going 'somewhere.' It appeared that they had thought of Venice, but were easily diverted from it by his design of coasting the eastern bank of the Lago di Como, and so across the Stelvio into the Tyrol, all together as far as Botzen, whence Philip would turn southwards by the mountain paths, while they would proceed to Innspruck on their return home.

Amabel was especially pleased to stay a little longer on the banks of the lake, and to trace out more of Lucia's haunts; and if she secretly thought it would have been pleasanter without a third person, she was gratified to see how much Guy's manner had softened Philip's injustice and distrust, making everything so smooth and satisfactory, that at the end of the day, she told her husband that she thought his experiment had not failed.

She was making the breakfast the next morning, when the captain came into the room, and she told him Guy was gone to settle their plans with Arnaud. After lingering a little by the window, Philip turned, and with more abruptness than was usual with him, said—

'You don't think there is any cause for anxiety about Laura?'

'No; certainly not!' said Amy, surprised. 'She has not been looking well lately, but Dr. Mayerne says it is nothing, and you know'—she blushed and looked down—'there were many things to make this a trying time.'

'Is she quite strong? Can she do as much as usual?'

‘She does more than ever: mamma is only afraid of her overworking herself, but she never allows that she is tired. She goes to school three days in the week, besides walking to East-hill on Thursday, to help in the singing; and she is getting dreadfully learned. Guy gave her his old mathematical books, and Charlie always calls her Miss Parabola.’

Philip was silent, knowing too well why she sought to stifle care in employment; and feeling embittered against the whole world, against her father, against his own circumstances, against the happiness of others; nay, perhaps, against the Providence which had made him what he was.

Presently Guy came in, and the first thing he said was, ‘I am afraid we must give up our plan.’

‘How?’ exclaimed both Philip and Amy.

‘I have just heard that there is a fever at Sondrio, and all that neighbourhood, and everyone says it would be very foolish to expose ourselves to it.’

‘What shall we do instead?’ said Amy.

‘I told Arnaud we would let him know in an hour’s time; I thought of Venice.’

‘Venice, oh, yes, delightful.’

‘What do you say, Philip?’ said Guy.

‘I say that I cannot see any occasion for our being frightened out of our original determination. If a fever prevails among the half-starved peasantry, it need not affect well-fed healthy persons, merely passing through the country.’

‘You see we could hardly manage without sleeping there,’ said Guy: ‘we must sleep either at Colico, or at Madonna. Now Colico, they say, is a most unhealthy place at this time of year, and Madonna is the very heart of the fever—Sondrio not much better. I don’t see how it is to be safely done: and though very likely we might not catch the fever, I don’t see any use in trying.’

‘That is making yourself a slave to the fear of infection.’

‘I don’t know what purpose would be answered by running the risk,’ said Guy.

‘If you choose to give it so dignified a name as a risk,’ said Philip.

‘I don’t, then,’ said Guy, smiling. ‘I should not care if there was any reason for going there; but, as there is not, I shall face Mrs. Edmonstone better if I don’t run Amy into any more chances of mischief.’

‘Is Amy grateful for the care?’ said Philip, ‘after all her wishes for the eastern bank?’

‘Amy is a good wife,’ said Guy. ‘For Venice, then. I’ll ring for Arnaud. You will come with us, won’t you, Philip?’

‘No, I thank you; I always intended to see the Valtelline, and an epidemic among the peasantry does not seem to me to be sufficient to deter.’

‘O Philip, you surely will not?’ said Amy.

‘My mind is made up, Amy, thank you.’

‘I wish you would be persuaded,’ said Guy. ‘I should like particularly to have you to lionize us there; and I don’t fancy your running into danger.’

The argument lasted long. Philip by no means approved of Venice, especially after the long loitering at Munich, thinking that in both places there was danger of Guy’s being led into mischief by his musical connexions. Therefore he did his best, for Amabel’s sake, to turn them from their purpose, persuaded in his own mind that the fever was a mere bugbear, raised up by Arnaud; and, perhaps, in his full health and strength, almost regarding illness itself as a foible, far more the dread of it. He argued, therefore, in his most provoking strain, becoming more vexatious as the former annoyance was revived at finding the impossibility of making Guy swerve from his purpose, while additional mists of suspicion arose before him, making him imagine that the whole objection was caused by Guy’s dislike to submit to him, and a fit of impatience of which Amy was the victim; nay, that his cousin wanted to escape from his surveillance, and follow the bent of

his inclinations; and the whole heap of prejudices and half-refuted accusations resumed their full ascendancy. Never had his manner been more vexatious, though without departing from the coolness which always characterized it; but all the time, Guy, while firm and unmoved in purpose, kept his temper perfectly, and apparently without effort. Even Amabel glowed with indignation, at the assumption with which he was striving to put her husband down, though she rejoiced to see its entire failure: for some sensible argument, or some gay, lively, good-humoured reply, was the utmost he could elicit. Guy did not seem to be in the least irritated or ruffled by the very behaviour which used to cause him so many struggles. Having once seriously said that he did not think it right to run into danger, without adequate cause, he held his position with so much ease, that he could afford to be playful, and laugh at his own dread of infection, his changeableness, and credulity. Never had temper been more entirely subdued; for surely if he could bear this, he need never fear himself again.

So passed the hour; and Amabel was heartily glad when the debate was closed by Arnaud's coming for orders. Guy went with him; Amabel began to collect her goods; and Philip, after a few moments' reflection, spoke in the half-compassionate, half-patronizing manner with which he used, now and then, to let fall a few crumbs of counsel or commendation for silly little Amy.

'Well, Amy, you yielded very amiably, and that is the only way. You will always find it best to submit.'

He got no further in his intended warning against the dissipations of Venice, for her eyes were fixed on him at first with a look of extreme wonder. Then her face assumed an expression of dignity, and gently, but gravely, she said, 'I think you forget to whom you are speaking.'

The gentlemanlike instinct made him reply, 'I beg your pardon'—and there he stopped, as much taken by

surprise as if a dove had flown in his face. He actually was confused ; for in very truth he had, after a fashion, forgotten that she was Lady Morville, not the cousin Amy with whom Guy's character might be freely discussed. He had often presumed as far with his aunt ; but she, though always turning the conversation, had never given him a rebuff. Amabel had not done ; and in her soft voice, firmly, though not angrily, she spoke on. ' One thing I wish to say, because we shall never speak on this subject again, and I was always afraid of you before. You have always misunderstood him ; I might almost say, chosen to misunderstand him. You have tried his temper more than any one, and never appreciated the struggles that have subdued it. It is not because I am his wife that I say this—indeed I am not sure it becomes me to say it ; yet I cannot bear that you should not be told of it, because you think he acts out of enmity to you. You little know how your friendship has been his first desire—how he has striven for it—how, after all you have done and written, he defended you with all his might when those at home were angry—how he sought you out on purpose to try to be real cordial friends.'

Philip's face had grown rigid, and chiefly at the words, ' those at home were angry.' ' It is not I that prevent that friendship,' said he : ' it is his own want of openness. My opinion has never changed.'

' No ; I know it has never changed,' said Amy, in a tone of sorrowful displeasure. ' Whenever it does, you will be sorry you have judged him so harshly.'

She left the room, and Philip held her in higher esteem. He saw there was spirit and substance beneath that soft girlish exterior, and hoped she would better be able to endure the troubles which her precipitate marriage was likely to cause her ; but as to her husband, his combined fickleness and obstinacy had only become more apparent than ever—fickleness in forsaking his purpose, obstinacy in adherence to his own will.

Displeased and contemptuous, Philip was not softened by Guy's freedom and openness of manner and desire to help him as far as their roads lay together. He was gracious only to Lady Morville, whom he treated with kindness, intended to shew that he was pleased with her for a reproof which became her position well, though it could not hurt him. Perhaps she thought this amiability especially insufferable: for when she arrived at Varenna her chief thought was that here they should be free of him.

'Come, Philip,' said Guy, at that last moment, 'I wish you would think better of it after all, and come with us to Milan.'

'Thank you, my mind is made up.'

'Well, mind you don't catch the fever: for I don't want the trouble of nursing you.'

'Thank you; I hope to require no such services of my friends,' said Philip, with a proud stern air, implying, 'I don't want you.'

'Good bye, then,' said Guy. Then remembering his promise to Laura, he added, 'I wish we could have seen more of you. They will be glad to hear of you at Hollywell. You have had one warm friend there all along.'

He was touched for a moment by this kind speech, and his tone was less grave and dignified. 'Remember me to them when you write,' he answered, 'and tell Laura she must not wear herself out with her studies. Good bye, Amy; I hope you will have a pleasant journey.'

The farewells were exchanged and the carriage drove off. 'Poor little Amy!' said Philip to himself, 'how she is improved. He has a sweet little wife in her. The fates have conspired to crown him with all man can desire, and little marvel if he should abuse his advantages. Poor little Amy! I have less hope than ever, since even her evident wishes could not bend his determination in this trifle; but she is a good little creature, happy in her blindness. May it long

continue! It is my uncle and aunt who are to be blamed.'

He set himself to ascend the mountain path, and they looked back, watching the firm vigorous steps with which he climbed the hill side, then stood to wave his hand to Amabel, looking a perfect specimen of health and activity.

'Just like himself,' said Amy, drawing so long a breath that Guy smiled, but did not speak.

'Are you much vexed?' said she.

'I don't feel as if I had made the most of my opportunities.'

'Then if you have not, I can tell you who has. What do you think of his beginning to give me a lecture how to behave to you?'

'Did he think you wanted it very much?'

'I don't know: for of course I could not let him go on.'

Guy was so much diverted at the idea of her wanting a lecture on wife-like deportment, that he had no time to be angry at the impertinence, and he made her laugh also by his view that it was all force of habit.

'Now, Guido—good Cavaliere Guido—do grant me one satisfaction,' said she, coaxingly. 'Only say you are very glad he is gone his own way.'

'On the contrary, I am sorry he is running his head into a fever,' said Guy, pretending to be provoking.

'I don't want you to be glad of that; I only want you to be glad he is not sitting here towering over us.'

Guy smiled, and began to whistle—

'Cock up your beaver, and cock it fu' sprush!'

CHAPTER IX.

And turned the thistles of a curse
To types beneficent.

WORDSWORTH.

IT was about three weeks after the rendezvous at Bellagio, that Sir Guy and Lady Morville arrived at Vicenza, on their way from Venice. They were in the midst of breakfast when Arnaud entered, saying,—

‘It was well, Sir Guy, that you changed your intention of visiting the Valtelline with Captain Morville.’

‘What! Have you heard anything of him?’

‘I fear that his temerity has caused him to suffer. I have just heard that an Englishman of your name is severely ill at Recoara.’

‘Where?’

‘At *la badia di Recoara*. It is what in English we call a watering-place, on the mountains to the north, where the Vicentini do go in summer for *fraicheur*, but they have all returned in the last two days, for fear of the infection.’

‘I’ll go and make inquiries,’ said Guy, rising in haste. Returning in a quarter of an hour, he said,—‘It is true. It can be no other than poor Philip. I have seen his doctor, an Italian, who, when he saw our name written, said it was the same. He calls it *una febbre molto grave*.’

‘Very heavy! Did he only know the name in writing?’

‘Only from seeing it on his passport. He has been unable to give any directions.’

‘How dreadfully ill he must be! And alone! What shall we do? You won’t think of leaving me behind you, whatever you do?’ exclaimed Amabel, imploringly.

‘It is at no great distance, and——’

‘O, don’t say that. Only take me with you. I will try to bear it, if you don’t think it right; but it will be very hard!’

Her eyes were full of tears, but she struggled to repress them, and was silent in suspense as she saw him considering.

‘My poor Amy!’ said he, presently; ‘I believe the anxiety would be worse for you if I were to leave you here.’

‘Oh, thank you!’ exclaimed she.

‘You will have nothing to do with the nursing. No, I don’t think there is much risk; so we will go together.’

‘Thank you! thank you! and perhaps I may be of some use. But is it very infectious?’

‘I hope not: caught at Colico, and imported to a fresh place, I should think there was little fear of its spreading. However, we must soon be off: I am afraid he is very ill, and almost deserted. In the first place, I had better send an express to the Consul at Venice, to ask him to recommend us a doctor, for I have not much faith in this Italian.’

They were soon on the way to Recoara, a road bordered on one side by high rocks, on the other by a little river flowing down a valley, shut in by mountains. The valley gradually contracted in the ascent, till it became a ravine, and further on a mere crevice, marked by the thick growth of the chesnut-trees; but before this greater narrowing, they saw the roofs of the houses in the little town. The sun shone clear, the air had grown fresh as they mounted higher; Amabel could hardly imagine sickness and sorrow in so

fair a spot, and turned to her husband to say so ; but he was deep in thought, and she would not disturb him.

The town was built on the bank of the stream, and very much shut in by the steep crags, which seemed almost to overhang the inn, to which they drove, auguring favourably of the place from its fresh, clean aspect.

Guy hastened to the patient, while Amabel was conducted to a room with a polished floor, and very little furniture, and there waited anxiously until he returned. There was a flush on his face, and almost before he spoke, he leant far out at the window to try to catch a breath of air.

‘We must find another room for him directly,’ said he. ‘He cannot possibly exist where he is—a little den—such an atmosphere of fever—enough to knock one down ! Will you have one got ready for him ?’

‘Directly, said Amabel, ringing. ‘How is he ?’

‘He is in a stupor : it is not sleep. He is frightfully ill. I never felt anything like the heat of his skin. But that stifling hole would account for much ; very likely he may revive, when we get him into a better atmosphere. No one has attended to him properly. It is a terrible thing to be ill in a foreign country without a friend !’

Arnaud came, and Amabel sent for the hostess, while Guy returned to his charge. Little care had been taken for the solitary traveller on foot, too ill to exact attention, and whose presence drove away custom ; but when his case was taken up by a Milord Inglese, the people of the inn were ready to do their utmost to cause their neglect to be forgotten, and everything was at the disposal of the Signora. The rooms were many, but very small, and the best she could contrive was to choose three rooms on the lower floor, rather larger than the rest, and opening into each other, as well as into the passage, so that it was possible to produce a thorough draught. Under her superintendence, Anne made the apartment look comfortable, and almost English, and,

sending word that all was ready, she proceeded to establish herself in the corresponding rooms on the floor above.

Philip was perfectly unconscious when he was carried to his new room. His illness had continued about a week, and had been aggravated first by his incredulous and determined resistance of it, and then by the neglect with which he had been treated. It was fearful to see how his great strength had been cut down, as there he lay with scarcely a sign of life, except his gasping, labouring breath. Guy stood over him, let the air blow in from the open window, sprinkled his face with vinegar, and moistened his lips, longing for the physician, for whom, however, he knew he must wait many hours. Perplexed, ignorant of the proper treatment, fearing to do harm, and extremely anxious, he still was almost rejoiced: for there was no one to whom he was so glad to do a service, and a hope arose of full reconciliation.

The patient was somewhat revived by the fresh air; he breathed more freely, moved, and made a murmuring sound, as if striving painfully for a word.

'*Da bere,*' at last he said; and if Guy had not known its meaning, it would have been plain from the gasping, parched manner in which it was uttered.

'Some water?' said Guy holding it to his lips, and on hearing the English, Philip opened his eyes, and, as he drank, gazed with a heavy sort of wonder. 'Is that enough? Do you like some on your forehead?'

'Thank you.'

'Is that more comfortable? We only heard to-day you were ill.'

He turned away restlessly, as if hardly glad to see Guy, and not awake to the circumstances, in a dull, feverish oppression of the senses. Delirium soon came on, or, more properly, delusion. He was distressed by thinking himself deserted, and struggling to speak Italian, and when Guy replied in English, though the native tongue seemed to fall kindly on his ear, yet, to

Guy's great grief, the old dislike appeared to prevent all comfort in his presence, though he could not repel his attentions. At night the wandering increased, till it became unintelligible raving, and strength was required to keep him in bed.

Amabel seldom saw her husband this evening. He once came up to see her, when she made him drink some coffee, but he soon went, telling her he should sit up, and begging her to go to rest quietly, as she looked pale and tired. The night was a terrible one, and morning only brought insensibility. The physician arrived, a sharp-looking Frenchman, who pronounced it to be a very severe and dangerous case, more violent than usual in malaria fever, and with more affection of the brain. Guy was glad to be set to do something, instead of standing by in inaction; but ice and blisters were applied without effect, and they were told it was likely to be long before the fever abated.

Day after day passed without improvement, and with few gleams of consciousness, and even these were not free from wandering: they were only intervals in the violent ravings, or the incoherent murmurs, and were never clear from some torturing fancy that he was alone and ill at Broadstone, and neither the Edmonstones nor his brother-officers would come to him, or else that he was detained from Stylehurst. 'Home' was the word oftenest on his lips. 'I would not go home,' the only expression that could sometimes be distinctly heard. He was obliged to depend on Guy as the only Englishman at hand; but whenever he recognised him, the traces of repugnance were evident, and in his clearer intervals, he always showed a preference for Arnaud's attendance. Still Guy persevered indefatigably, sitting up with him every night, and showing himself an invaluable nurse, with his tender hand, modulated voice, quick eye, and quiet activity. His whole soul was engrossed: he never appeared to think of himself, or to be sensible of fatigue; but was only absorbed in the one thought of his patient's comfort.

He seldom came to Amabel except at meals, and now and then for a short visit to her sitting-room to report on Philip's condition. If he could spare a little more time, when Philip was in a state of stupor, she used to try to persuade him to take some rest; and if it was late, or in the heat of noon, she could sometimes get him, as a favour to her, to lie down on the sofa, and let her read to him; but it did not often end in sleep, and he usually preferred taking her out into the fresh air, and wandering about among the chesnut-trees and green hillocks higher up in the ravine.

Very precious were these walks, with the quiet, grave talk that the scene and the circumstances inspired—when he would tell the thoughts that had occupied him in his night-watches, and they shared the subdued and deep reflections suited to this period of apprehension. These were her happiest times, but they were few and uncertain. She had in the meantime to wait, to watch, and hope alone, though she had plenty of employment: for besides writing constant bulletins, all preparations for the sick-room fell to her share. She had to send for or devise substitutes for all the conveniences that were far from coming readily to hand in a remote Italian inn—to give orders, send commissions to Vicenza, or even to Venice, and to do a good deal, with Anne's assistance, by her own manual labour. Guy said she did more for Philip outside his room than he did inside, and often declared how entirely at a loss he should have been if she had not been there, with her ready resources, and, above all, with her sweet presence, making the short intervals he spent out of the sick chamber so much more than repose, such refreshment at the time, and in remembrance.

Thus it had continued for more than a fortnight, when one evening as the French physician was departing, he told Guy that he would not fail to come the next night, as he saw every reason to expect a crisis. Guy sat intently marking every alteration in the worn, flushed, suffering face that rested helplessly on the

pillows, and every unconscious movement of the wasted, nerveless limbs stretched out in pain and helplessness, contrasting his present state with what he was when last they parted, in the full pride of health, vigour, and intellect. He dwelt on all that had passed between them from the first, the strange ancestral enmity that nothing had as yet overcome, the misunderstandings, the prejudices, the character whose faultlessness he had always revered, and the repeated failure of all attempts to be friends, as if his own impatience and passion had borne fruit in the merited distrust of the man whom of all others he respected, and whom he would fain love as a brother. He earnestly hoped that so valuable a life might be spared, but if that might not be, his fervent wish was that at least a few parting words of good will and reconciliation might be granted to be his comfort in remembrance.

So mused Guy during the night, as he watched the heavy doze between sleep and stupor, and tried to catch the low, indistinct mutterings that now and then seemed to ask for something. Towards morning Philip awoke more fully, and as Guy was feeling his pulse, he faintly asked,—

‘How many?’ while his eyes had more of their usual expression.

‘I cannot count,’ returned Guy; ‘but it is less than in the evening. Some drink?’

Philip took some, then making an effort to look round, said, ‘What day is it?’

‘Saturday morning, the 23rd of August.’

‘I have been ill a long time!’

‘You have indeed, full three weeks; but you are better to-night.’

He was silent for some moments; then collecting himself, and looking fixedly at Guy, he said, in his own steady voice, though very feeble, ‘I suppose, humanly speaking, it is an even chance between life and death?’

‘Yes,’ said Guy, firmly, the low sweet tones of his voice full of tenderness. ‘You are very ill, but not

without hope.' Then, after a pause, during which Philip looked thoughtful, but calm, he added—'I have tried to bring a clergyman here, but I could not succeed. Would you like me to read to you?'

'Thank you—presently—but I have something to say. Some more water;—thank you.' Then, after pausing, 'Guy, you have thought I judged you harshly; I meant to act for the best.'

'Don't think of that,' said Guy, with a rush of joy at hearing the words of reconciliation he had yearned for so long.

'And now you have been most kind. If I live, you shall see that I am sensible of it;' and he feebly moved his hand to his cousin, who pressed it, hardly less happy than on the day he stood before Mrs. Edmonstone in the dressing-room. Presently, Philip went on. 'My sister has my will. My love to her, and to—to—to poor Laura.' His voice suddenly failed; and while Guy was again moistening his lips, he gathered strength, and said, 'You and Amy will do what you can for her. Do not let the blow come suddenly. Ah! you do not know. We have been engaged this long time.'

Guy did not exclaim, but Philip saw his amazement.

'It was very wrong; it was not her fault,' he added. 'I can't tell you now; but if I live, all shall be told. If not, you will be kind to her?'

'Indeed we will.'

'Poor Laura!' again said Philip, in a much weaker voice, and after lying still a little longer, he faintly whispered. 'Read to me.'

Guy read till he fell into a doze, which lasted till Arnaud came in the morning, and Guy went up to his wife.

'Amy,' said he, entering with a quiet bright look, 'he has spoken to me according to my wish.'

'Then it is all right,' said Amabel, answering his look with one as calm and sweet. 'Is he better?'

'Not materially; his pulse is still very high; but

there was a gleam of perfect consciousness, he spoke calmly and clearly, fully understanding his situation. Come what will, it is a thing to be infinitely thankful for! I am very glad! Now for our morning reading.'

As soon as it was over, and when Guy had satisfied himself that the patient was still quiet, they sat down to breakfast. Guy considered a little while, and said,

'I have been very much surprised. Had you any idea of an attachment between him and Laura?'

'I know she is very fond of him, and she has always been his favourite. What? Has he been in love with her all this time, poor fellow?'

'He says they are engaged.'

'Laura? Our sister! Oh Guy, impossible! He must have been wandering.'

'I could almost have thought so; but his whole manner forbade me to think there was any delusion. He was too weak to explain, but he said it was not her fault, and was overcome when speaking of her. He begged us to spare her from suddenly hearing of his death. He was as calm and reasonable as I am at this moment. No, Amy, it was not delirium.'

'I don't know how to believe it!' said Amabel. 'It is so impossible for Laura, and for him too. Don't you know how, sometimes in fevers, people take a delusion, and are quite rational about everything else, and that, too; if only it was true; and don't you think it very likely, that if he really has been in love with her all this time, (how much he must have gone through!) he may fancy he has been secretly engaged, and reproach himself?'

'I cannot tell,' said Guy; 'there was a reality in his manner of speaking, that refuses to let me disbelieve him. Surely it cannot be one of the horrors of death that we should be left to reproach ourselves with the fancied sins we have been prone to, as well as with our real ones. Then'—and he rose, and walked about the room—'if so, more than ever, in the hour of death, good Lord, deliver us!'

Amabel was silent, and presently he sat down, saying, 'Well, time will show!'

'I cannot think it!' said Amy. 'Laura! How could she help telling mamma?' And as Guy smiled at the recollection of their own simultaneous coming to mamma, she added, 'not only because it was right, but for the comfort of it.'

'But, Amy, do you remember what I told you of poor Laura's tears, and what she said to me, on our wedding-day?'

'Poor Laura!' said Amy. 'Yet—' She paused, and Guy presently said,

'Well, I won't believe it, if I can possibly help it. I can't afford to lose my faith in my sister's perfection, or Philip's, especially now. But I must go; I have loitered too long, and Arnaud ought to go to his breakfast.'

Amabel sat long over the remains of her breakfast. She did not puzzle herself over Philip's confession, for she would not admit it without confirmation; and she could not think of his misdoings, even those of which she was certain, on the day when his life was hanging in the balance. All she could bear to recollect was his excellence; nay, in the tenderness of her heart, she nearly made out that she had always been very fond of him, overlooking that even before Guy came to Hollywell, she had always regarded him with more awe than liking, been disinclined to his good advice, shrunk from his condescension, and regularly enjoyed Charles's quizzing of him. All this, and all the subsequent injuries were forgotten, and she believed, as sincerely as her husband, that Philip had been free from any unkind intention. But she chiefly dwelt on her own Guy, especially that last speech, so unlike some of whom she had heard, who were rather glad to find a flaw in a faultless model, if only to obtain a fellow-feeling for it. 'Yes,' thought she, 'he might look far without finding anything better than himself, though he won't believe it. If ever he could make me angry, it will be

by treating me as if I was better than he. Such nonsense! But I suppose his goodness would not be such if he was conscious of it, so I must be content with him as he is. I can't be so unwife-like after all; for I am sure nothing makes me feel so small and foolish as that humility of his! Come, I must see about some dinner for the French doctor.'

She set to work on her housewifely cares; but when these were despatched, it was hard to begin anything else on such a day of suspense, when she was living on reports from the sick-room. The delirium had returned, more violent than ever; and as she sat at her open window, she often heard the disconnected words. She could do nothing but listen—she could neither read nor draw, and even letter-writing failed her to-day, for it seemed cruel to send a letter to his sister, and if Philip was not under a delusion, it was still worse to write to Hollywell; it made her shudder to think of the misery she might have inflicted in the former letters, where she had not spared the detail of her worst fears and conjectures, and by no means softened the account, as she had done to his sister.

Late in the afternoon the physician came, and she heard of his being quieter; indeed, there were no sounds below. It grew dark, Arnaud brought lights, and told her, Captain Morville had sunk into stupor. After another long space, the doctor came to take some coffee, and said the fever was lessening, but that strength was going with it, and if *le malade* was saved, it would be owing to the care and attention of *le chevalier*.

Of Guy she saw no more that evening. The last bulletin was pencilled by him on a strip of paper, and sent to her at eleven at night:

'Pulse almost nothing; deadly faintness; doctor does not give him up; it may be many hours; don't sit up; you shall hear when there is anything decisive.'

Amy submitted, and slowly put herself to bed, because she thought Guy would not like to find her up;

but she had little sleep, and that was dreamy, full of the same anxieties as her waking moments, and perhaps making the night seem longer than if she had been awake the whole time.

At last she started from a somewhat sounder doze than usual, and saw it was becoming light; the white summits of the mountains were beginning to show themselves, and there was twilight in the room. Just then she heard a light, cautious tread in the passage; the lock of Guy's dressing-room was gently, slowly turned. It was over, then! Life or death? Her heart beat as she heard her husband's step in the next room, and her suspense would let her call out nothing but—'I am not asleep!'

Guy came forward, and stood still, while she looked up to the outline of his figure against the window. With a kind of effort he said, with forced calmness—'He'll *do* now!' and came to the bed-side. His face was wet with tears, and her eyes were overflowing. After a few moments he murmured a few low words of deep thanksgivings, and again there was a silence.

'He is asleep quietly and comfortably,' said Guy, presently, 'and his pulse is steadier. The faintness and sinking have been dreadful; the doctor has been sitting with his hand on his pulse, telling me when to put the cordial into his mouth. Twice I thought him all but gone; and till within the last hour, I did not think he could have revived; but now, the doctor says, we may almost consider the danger as over.'

'Oh, how glad I am! Was he sensible? Could he speak?'

'Sensible, at least when not fainting; but too weak to speak, or often to look up. When he did, though, it was very kindly, very pleasantly. And now! This is joy coming in the morning, Amy!'

'I wonder if you are happier now than after the shipwreck,' said Amy, after a silence.

'How can you ask? The shipwreck was a gleam, the first ray that came to cheer me in those penance

hours, when I was cut off from all ; and now, oh, Amy ! I cannot enter into it. Such richness and fullness of blessing showered on me, more than I ever dared to wish for or dream of, both in the present and future hopes. It seems more than can belong to man, at least to me, so unlike what I have deserved, that I can hardly believe it. It must be sent as a great trial.'

Amabel thought this so beautiful, that she could not answer ; and he presently gave her some further particulars. He went back in spite of her entreaties that he would afford himself a little rest, saying that the doctor was obliged to go away, and Philip still needed the most careful watching. Amy could not sleep any more ; but lay musing over that ever-brightening goodness which had lately at all times almost startled her from its very unearthliness.

CHAPTER X.

Sure all things wear a heavenly dress,
Which sanctifies their loveliness,
Types of that endless resting day
When we shall be as changed as they.

Hymn for Sunday.

FROM that time there was little more cause for anxiety. Philip was, indeed, exceedingly reduced, unable to turn in bed, to lift his hand, or to speak, except now and then a feeble whisper; but the fever was entirely gone, and his excellent constitution began rapidly to repair its ravages. Day by day, almost hour by hour, he was rallying, spending most of his time profitably in sleep, and looking very contented in his short intervals of waking. These became each day rather longer, his voice became stronger, and he made more remarks and inquiries. His first care, when able to take heed to what did not concern his immediate comfort, was that Colonel Deane should be written to, as his leave of absence was expired; but he said not a word about Hollywell, and Amabel therefore hoped her surmise was right, that his confession had been prompted by a delirious fancy, though Guy thought something was implied by his silence respecting the very persons of whom it would have been natural to have talked.

He was very patient of his weakness and dependence, always thankful and willing to be pleased, and all that had been unpleasant in his manner to Guy was

entirely gone. He liked to be waited on by him, and received his attentions without laborious gratitude, just in the way, partly affectionate, partly matter of course, that was most agreeable; showing himself considerate of his fatigue, though without any of his old domineering advice.

One evening, Guy was writing, when Philip, who had been lying still, as if asleep, asked, 'Are you writing to Hollywell?'

'Yes, to Charlotte; but there is no hurry, it won't go till to-morrow. Have you any message?'

'No, thank you.'

Guy fancied he sighed; and there was a long silence, at the end of which he asked, 'Guy, have I said anything about Laura?'

'Yes,' said Guy, putting down the pen.

'I thought so; but I could not remember,' said Philip, turning round, and settling himself for conversation, with much of his ordinary deliberate preparation, 'I hope it was not when I had no command of myself.'

'No, you were seldom intelligible; you were generally trying to speak Italian, or else talking about Stylehurst. The only time you mentioned her was the night before the worst.'

'I recollect,' said Philip. 'I will not draw back from the resolution I then made, though I did not know whether I had spoken it, let the consequences be what they may. The worst is, that they will fall the most severely on her; and her implicit reliance on me was her only error.'

His voice was very low, and so full of painful feeling that Guy doubted whether to let him enter on such a subject at present; but remembering the relief of free confession he thought it best to allow him to proceed, only now and then putting in some note of sympathy or of interrogation, in word or gesture.

'I must explain,' said Philip, 'that you may see how little blame can be imputed to her. It was that summer, three years ago, the first after you came. I

had always been her chief friend. I saw, or thought I saw, cause for putting her on her guard. The result has shown that the danger was imaginary; but no matter—I thought it real. In the course of the conversation, more of my true sentiments were avowed than I was aware of; she was very young, and before we, either of us, knew what we were doing, it had been equivalent to a declaration. Well! I do not speak to excuse the concealment, but to show you my motive. If it had been known, there would have been great displeasure and disturbance, I should have been banished; and though time might have softened matters, we should both have had a great deal to go through. Heaven knows what it may be now! And Guy,' he added, breaking off with trembling eagerness, 'when did you hear from Hollywell? Do you know how she has borne the news of my illness?'

'We have heard since they knew of it,' said Guy; 'the letter was from Mrs. Edmonstone to Amy; but she did not mention Laura.'

'She has great strength; she would endure anything rather than give way; but how can she have borne the anxiety and silence? You are sure my aunt does not mention her?'

'Certain. I will ask Amy for the letter, if you like.'

'No, do not go; I must finish, since I have begun. We did not speak of an engagement; it was little more than an avowal of preference; I doubt whether she understood what it amounted to, and I desired her to be silent. I deceived myself all along, by declaring she was free; and I had never asked for her promise; but those things will not do when we see death face to face, and a resolve made at such a moment must be kept, let it bring what it may.'

'True.'

'She will be relieved; she wished it to be known; but I thought it best to wait for my promotion—the only chance of our being able to marry. However, it shall be put into her father's hands as soon as I can

hold a pen. All I wish is, that she should not have to bear the brunt of his anger.'

'He is too kind and good-natured to keep his displeasure long.'

'If it would only light on the right head, instead of on the head of the nearest. You say she was harassed and out of spirits. I wish you were at home; Amy would comfort her and soften them.'

'We hope to go back as soon as you are in travelling condition. If you will come home with us, you will be at hand when Mr. Edmonstone is ready to forgive, as I am sure he soon will be. No one ever was so glad to forget his displeasure.'

'Yes; it will be over by the time I meet him, for she will have borne it all. There is the worst! But I will not put off the writing, as soon as I have the power. Every day the concealment continues is a further offence.'

'And present suffering is an especial earnest and hope of forgiveness,' said Guy. 'I have no doubt that much may be done to make Mr. Edmonstone think well of it.'

'If any suffering of mine would spare hers!' sighed Philip. 'You cannot estimate the difficulties in our way. You know nothing of poverty, the bar it is to everything; almost a positive offence in itself!'

'This is only tiring yourself with talking,' said Guy, perceiving how Philip's bodily weakness was making him fall into a desponding strain. 'You must make haste to get well, and come home with us, and I think we shall find it no such bad case after all. There's Amy's fortune to begin with, only waiting for such an occasion. No; I can't have you answer; you have talked quite long enough.'

Philip was in a state of feebleness that made him willing to avoid the trouble of thinking, by simply believing what he was told, 'that it was no bad case.' He was relieved by having confessed, though to the person whom, a few weeks back, he would have thought

the last to whom he could have made such a communication, over whom he had striven to assume superiority, and therefore before whom he could have least borne to humble himself—nay, whose own love he had lately traversed with an arrogance that was rendered positively absurd by this conduct of his own. Nevertheless, he had not shrunk from the confession. His had been real repentance, so far as he perceived his faults; and he would have scorned to avail himself of the certainty of Guy's silence on what he had said at the time of his extreme danger. He had resolved to speak, and had found neither an accuser nor a judge, not even one consciously returning good for evil, but a friend with honest, simple, straightforward kindness, doing the best for him in his power, and dreading nothing so much as hurting his feelings. It was not the way in which Philip himself could have received such a confidence.

As soon as Guy could leave him, he went up to his wife. 'Amy,' said he, rather sadly, 'we have had it out. It is too true.'

Her first exclamation surprised him: 'Then Charlie really is the cleverest person in the world.'

'How? Had he any suspicion?'

'Not that I know of; but, more than once, lately, I have been alarmed by recollecting how he once said that poor Laura was so much too wise for her age, that Nature would some day take her revenge, and make her do something very foolish. But has Philip told you all about it?'

'Yes; explained it all very kindly. It must have cost him a great deal; but he spoke openly and nobly. It is the beginning of a full confession to your father.'

'So, it is true!' exclaimed Amabel, as if she heard it for the first time. 'How shocked mamma will be! I don't know how to think it possible! And poor Laura! Imagine what she must have gone through; for you know I never spared the worst accounts. Do tell me all.'

Guy told what he had just heard, and she was indignant.

‘I can’t be as angry with him as I should like,’ said she, ‘now that he is sorry and ill; but it was a great deal too bad! I can’t think how he could look any of us in the face, far less expect to rule us all, and interfere with you!’

‘I see I never appreciated the temptations of poverty,’ said Guy, thoughtfully. ‘I have often thought of those of wealth, but never of poverty.’

‘I wish you would not excuse him. I don’t mind your doing it about ourselves, because though he made you unhappy, he could not make you do wrong. Ah! I know what you mean; but that was over after the first minute; and he only made you better for all his persecution; but I don’t know how to pardon his making poor Laura so miserable, and leading her to do what was not right. Poor, dear girl! no wonder she looked so worn and unhappy! I cannot help being angry with him, indeed, Guy!’ said she, her eyes full of tears.

‘The best pleading is his own repentance, Amy. I don’t think you can be very unrelenting when you see how subdued, and how altered he is. You know you are to make him a visit to-morrow, now the doctor says all fear of infection is over.’

‘I shall be thinking of poor Laura the whole time.’

‘And how she would like to see him in his present state? What shall you do if I bring him home to Redclyffe? Shall you go to Hollywell, to comfort Laura?’

‘I shall wait till you send me. Besides, how can you invite company till we know whether we have a roof over our house or not? What is he doing now?’

‘As usual, he has an unlimited capacity for sleep.’

‘I wish you had. I don’t think you have slept two hours together since you left off sitting up.’

‘I am beginning to think it a popular delusion. I do just as well without it.’

‘So you say; but Mr. Shene would never have taken

such a fancy to you, if you always had such purple lines as those under your eyes. Look! Is that a face for Sir Galahad, or Sir Guy, or any of the Round Table? Come I wish you would lie down, and be read to sleep.'

'I should like a walk much better. It is very cool and bright. Will you come?'

They walked for some time, talking over the conduct of Philip and Laura. Amabel seemed quite oppressed by the thought of such a burthen of concealment. She said she did not know what she should have done in her own troubles without mamma and Charlie; and she could not imagine Laura's keeping silence through the time of Philip's danger; more especially as she recollected how appalling some of her bulletins had been. The only satisfaction was in casting as much of the blame on him as possible.

'You know he never would let her read novels; and I do believe that was the reason she did not understand what it meant.'

'I think there is a good deal in that,' said Guy, laughing, 'though Charlie would say it is a very *novel* excuse for a young lady falling imprudently in love.'

'I do believe, if it was any one but Laura, Charlie would be very glad of it. He always fully saw through Philip's supercilious shell.'

'Amy!'

'No; let me go on, Guy, for you must allow that it was much worse in such a grave, grand, unromantic person, who makes a point of thinking before he speaks, than if it had been a hasty, hand-over-head man like Maurice de Courcy, who might have got into a scrape without knowing it.'

'That must have made the struggle to confess all the more painful; and a most free, noble, open-hearted confession it was.'

They tried to recollect all that had passed during that summer, and to guess against whom he had wished to warn her; but so far were they from divining the

truth, that they agreed it must either have been Maurice, or some other wild Irishman.

Next, they considered what was to be done. Philip must manage his confession his own way ; but they had it in their power greatly to soften matters ; and there was no fear that, after the first shock, Mr. Edmonstone would insist on the engagement being broken off. Philip should come to recover his health at Redclyffe, where he would be ready to meet the first advance towards forgiveness,—and Amabel thought it would soon be made. Papa's anger was sharp, but soon over ; he was very fond of Philip, and delighted in a love affair ; but she was afraid mamma would not get over it so soon, for she would be excessively hurt and grieved. 'And when I was naughty,' said Amy, 'nothing ever made me so sorry as mamma's kindness.'

Guy launched out into more schemes for facilitating their marriage than ever he had made for himself ; and the walk ended with extensive castle building on Philip's account, in the course of which Amy was obliged to become much less displeased. Guy told her, in the evening, that she would have been still more softened if she could have heard him talk about Stylehurst and his father. Guy had always wished to hear him speak of the Archdeacon, though they had never been on terms to enter on such a subject. And now Philip had been much pleased by Guy's account of his walks to Stylehurst, and taken pleasure in telling which were his old haunts, making out where Guy had been, and describing his father's ways.

The next day was Sunday, and Amabel was to pay her cousin a visit. Guy was very eager about it, saying it was like a stage in his recovery ; and though the thought of her mother and Laura could not be laid aside, she would not say a word to damp her husband's pleasure in the anticipation. It seemed as if Guy, wanting to bestow all he could upon his cousin in gratitude for his newly-accorded friendship, thought the sight of his little wife the very best thing he had to give.

It was a beautiful day, early in September, with a little autumnal freshness in the mountain breezes that they enjoyed exceedingly. Philip's convalescence, and their own escape, might be considered as so far decided, that they might look back on the peril as past. Amabel felt how much cause there was for thankfulness; and, after all, Philip was not half as bad now as when he was maintaining his system of concealment; he had made a great effort, and was about to do his best by way of reparation; but it was so new to her to pity him, that she did not know how to begin.

She tried to make the day seem as Sunday-like as she could, by putting on her white muslin dress and white ribbons, with Charles's hair bracelet, and a brooch of beautiful silver workmanship, which Guy had bought for her at Milan, the only ornament he had ever given to her. She sat at her window, watching the groups of Italians in their holiday costume, and dwelling on the strange thoughts that had passed through her mind often before in her lonely Sundays in this foreign land, thinking much of her old home and East-hill Church, wondering whether the letter had yet arrived which was to free them from anxiety, and losing herself in a maze of uncomfortable marvels about Laura.

'Now, then,' at length said Guy, entering, 'I only hope he has not knocked himself up with his preparations, for he would make such a setting to rights, that I told him I could almost fancy he expected the queen instead of only Dame Amabel Morville.'

He led her down, opened the door, and playfully announced, 'Lady Morville! I have done it right this time. Here she is!'

She had of course expected to see Philip much altered, but she was startled by the extent of the change; for being naturally fair and high-coloured, he was a person on whom the traces of illness were particularly visible. The colour was totally gone, even from his lips; his cheeks were sunken, his brow looked broader and more massive from the thinness of his face and the

loss of his hair, and his eyes themselves appeared unlike what they used to be in the hollows round them. He seemed tranquil, and comfortable, but so wan, weak, and subdued, and so different from himself, that she was very much shocked; as smiling and holding out a hand, where the white skin seemed hardly to cover the bone and blue vein, he said, in a tone, slow, feeble, and languid, though cheerful,

‘Good morning, Amy. You see Guy was right after all. I am sorry to have made your wedding tour end so unpleasantly.’

‘Nay, most pleasantly, since you are better,’ said Amabel, laughing, because she was almost ready to cry, and her displeasure went straight out of her head.

‘Are you doing the honours of my room, Guy?’ said Philip, raising his head from the pillow, with a becoming shade of his ceremonious courtesy. ‘Give her a chair.’

Amy smiled and thanked him, while he lay gazing at her as a sick person is apt to do at a flower, or the first pretty enlivening object from which he is able to derive enjoyment; and as if he could not help expressing the feeling, he said—

‘Is that your wedding dress, Amy?’

‘Oh, no; that was all lace and finery.’

‘You look so nice and bridal——’

‘There’s a compliment that such an old wife ought to make the most of, Amy,’ said Guy, looking at her with a certain proud satisfaction in Philip’s admiration. ‘It is high time to leave off calling you a bride, after your splendid appearance at the party at Munich, in all your whiteness and orange flowers.’

‘That was quite enough of it,’ said Amy, smiling.

‘Not at all,’ said Philip; ‘you have all your troubles in the visiting line to come, when you go home.’

‘Ah! you know the people, and will be a great help to us,’ said Amy, and Guy was much pleased to hear her taking a voluntary share in the invitation, knowing as he did that she only half liked it.

‘Thank you; we shall see,’ replied Philip.

‘Yes; we shall see when you are fit for the journey, and it will not be long before we can begin, by short stages. You have got on wonderfully in the last few days. How do you think he is looking, Amy?’ finished Guy, with an air of triumph, that was rather amusing, considering what a pale skeleton face he was regarding with so much satisfaction.

‘I daresay he is looking much mended,’ said Amy; ‘but you must not expect me to see it.’

‘You can’t get a compliment for me, Guy,’ said Philip. ‘I was a good deal surprised when Arnaud brought me the glass this morning.’

‘It is a pity you did not see yourself a week ago,’ said Guy, shaking his head drolly. ‘It is certain, as the French doctor says, that monsieur has a very vigorous constitution.’

‘Charles says, having a good constitution, is only another name for undergoing every possible malady,’ said Amy.

‘Rather good,’ said Guy; ‘for I certainly find it answer very well to have none at all.’

‘Haven’t you?’ said Amy, rather startled.

‘Or how do you know?’ said Philip, ‘especially as you never were ill.’

‘It is a dictum of old Walters, the Moorworth doctor, the last time I had anything to do with him, when I was a small child. I suppose I remembered it for its oracular sound, and because I was not intended to listen. He was talking over with Markham some illness I had just got through, and wound up with, ‘He may be healthy and active now; but he has no constitution, there is a tendency to low fever, and if he meets with any severe illness, it will go hard with him.’

‘How glad I am I did not know that before,’ cried Amy.

‘Did you remember it when you came here?’ said Philip.

‘Yes,’ said Guy, not in the least conscious of the

impression his words made on the others. 'By-the-bye, Philip, I wish you would tell us how you fared after we parted, and how you came here.'

'I went on according to my former plan,' said Philip, 'walking through the Valtelline, and coming down by a mountain path. I was not well at Bolzano, but I thought it only fatigue, which a Sunday's rest would remove, so on I went for the next two days, in spite of pain in head and limbs.'

'Not walking?' said Amy.

'Yes, walking. I thought it was stiffness from mountain climbing, and that I could walk it off; but I never wish to go through anything like what I did the last day, between the ups and downs of that mountain path, and the dazzle of the snow and heat of the sun. I meant to have reached Vicenza, but I must have been quite knocked up when I arrived here, though I cannot tell. My head grew so confused, that my dread, all the way, was that I should forget my Italian; I can just remember conning a phrase over and over again, lest I should lose it. I suppose I was able to speak when I came here; but the last thing I remember was feeling very ill in some room, different from this, quite alone, and with a horror of dying deserted. The next is a confused recollection of the relief of hearing English again, and seeing my excellent nurse here.'

There was a little more talk, but a little was enough for Philip's feeble voice, and Guy soon told him he was tired, and ordered in his broth. He begged that Amy would stay, and it was permitted on condition that he would not talk, Guy even cutting short a quotation of, — 'As Juno had been sick and he her dieter,' — appropriate to the excellence of the broths, which Amabel and her maid, thanks to their experience of Charles's fastidious tastes, managed to devise and execute, in spite of bad materials. It was no small merit in Guy to stop the compliment, considering how edified he had been by his wife's unexpected ingenuity, and what a comical account he had written of it to her mother.

such, as Amy told him, deserved to be published in a book of good advice to young ladies, to show what they might come to if they behaved well. However, she was glad to have ocular demonstration of the success of the cookery, which she had feared might turn out uneatable; and her gentle feelings towards Philip were touched, by seeing one wont to be full of independence and self-assertion, now meek and helpless, requiring to be lifted, and propped up with pillows, and depending entirely and thankfully upon Guy.

When he had been settled and made comfortable, they read the service; and she thought her husband's tones had never been so sweet as now, modulated to the pitch best suited to the sick-room, and with the peculiarly beautiful expression he always gave such reading. It was the lesson from Jeremiah, on the different destiny of Josiah and his sons, and he read that verse, 'Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him, but weep sore for him that goeth away; for he shall return no more, nor see his native country,' with so remarkable a melancholy and beauty in his voice, that she could hardly refrain from tears, and it also greatly struck Philip, who had been so near 'returning no more, neither seeing his native country.'

When the reading was over, and they were leaving him to rest, while they went to dinner, he said, as he wished Amy good bye, 'Till now I never discovered the practical advantage of such a voice as Guy's. There never was such a one for a sick-room. Last week I could not bear any one else to speak at all; and even now, no one else could have read so that I could like it.'

'Your voice; yes,' said Amy, after they had returned to their own sitting-room. 'I want to hear it very much. I wonder when you will sing to me again.'

'Not till he has recovered strength to bear the infliction with firmness,' said Guy; 'but Amy, I'll tell you what we will do, if you are sure it is good for you.

He will have a good long sleep, and we will have a walk on the green hillocks.'

Accordingly, they wandered in the cool of the evening on the grassy slopes under the chesnut-trees, making it a Sunday walk, calm, bright and meditative, without many words, but those deep and grave, 'such as their walks had been before they were married,' as Amabel said.

'Better,' he answered.

A silence, broken by her asking, 'Do you recollect your melancholy definition of happiness, years ago?'

'What was it?'

'Gleams from another world, too soon eclipsed or forfeited. It made me sad then. Do you hold to it now?'

'Don't you?'

'I want to know what you would say now.'

'Gleams from another world, brightening as it gets nearer.'

Amabel repeated—

Ever the richest, tenderest glow,
Sets round the autumnal sun;
But their sight fails, no heart may know
The bliss when life is done.

'Old age,' she added; 'that seems very far off.'

'Each day is a step,' he answered, and then came a silence while both were thinking deeply.

They sat down to rest under a tree, the mountains before them with heavy dark clouds hanging on their sides, and the white crowns clear against the blue sky, a perfect stillness on all around, and the red glow of an Italian sun-set just fading away.

'There is only one thing wanting,' said Amy. 'You may sing now. You are far from Philip's hearing. Suppose we chant this afternoon's psalms.'

It was the fifth day of the month, and the psalms seemed especially suitable to their thoughts. Before

the 29th was finished, it was beginning to grow dark. There were a few pale flashes of lightning in the mountains, and at the words 'The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness,' a low but solemn peal of thunder came as an accompaniment.

'The Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.'

The full sweet melody died away, but the echo caught it up and answered like the chant of a spirit in the distance—'The blessing of peace.'

The effect was too solemn and mysterious to be disturbed by word or remark. Guy drew her arm into his, and they turned homewards.

They had some distance to walk, and night had closed in before they reached the village, but it was only more lovely. The thunder rolled solemnly among the hills, but the young moon shone in marvellous whiteness on the snowy crowns, casting fantastic shadows from the crags, while whole showers of fire-flies were falling on them from the trees, floating and glancing in the shade.

'It is a pity to go in,' said Amy. But Arnaud did not seem to be of the same opinion: he came out to meet them very anxiously, expostulating on the dangers of the autumnal dew; and Guy owned that though it had been the most wonderful and delightful evening he had ever known, he was rather fatigued.

CHAPTER X.

From darkness here, and dreariness,
We ask not full repose.

Christian Year.

IT seemed as if the fatigue which Guy had undergone was going to make itself felt at last, for he had a slight headache the next morning, and seemed dull and weary. Both he and Amabel sat for some time with Philip, and when she went away to write her letters, Philip began discussing a plan which had occurred to him of offering himself as chief of the constabulary force in the county where Redclyffe was situated. It was an office which would suit him very well, and opened a new hope of his marriage, and he proceeded to reckon on Lord Thorndale's interest, counting up all the magistrates he knew, and talking them over with Guy, who, however, did not know enough of his own neighbourhood to be of much use; and when he came up stairs a little after, said he was vexed at having been so stupid. He was afraid he had seemed unkind and indifferent, but the truth was that he was so heavy and drowsy, that he had actually fallen twice into a doze while Philip was talking.

'Of course,' said Amy, 'gentle sleep will take her revenge at last for your calling her a popular delusion. Lie down, let her have her own way, and you will be good for something by and by.'

He took her advice, slept for a couple of hours, and awoke a good deal refreshed, so that though his head

still ached, he was able to attend as usual to Philip in the evening.

He did not waken the next morning till so late, that he sprung up in consternation, and began to dress in haste to go to Philip; but presently he came back from his dressing-room with a hasty uncertain step, and threw himself down on the bed. Amabel came to his side in an instant, much frightened at his paleness, but he spoke directly. 'Only a fit of giddiness—it is going off;' and he raised himself, but was obliged to lie down again directly.

'You had better keep quiet,' said she. 'Is it your headache?'

'It is aching,' said Guy, and she put her hand over it.

'How hot and throbbing!' said she. 'You must have caught cold in that walk. No, don't try to move; it is only making it worse.'

'I must go to Philip,' he answered, starting up; but this brought on such a sensation of dizziness and faintness, that he sunk back on the pillow.

'No; it is of no use to fight against it,' said Amy, as soon as he was a little better. 'Never mind Philip, I'll go to him. You must keep quiet, and I will get you a cup of hot tea.'

As he lay still, she had the comfort of seeing him somewhat revived; but he listened to her persuasions not to attempt to move. It was later than she had expected, and she found that breakfast was laid out in the next room. She brought him some tea; but he did not seem inclined to lift his head to drink it; and begged her to go at once to Philip, fearing he must be thinking himself strangely forgotten, and giving her many directions about the way he liked to be waited on at breakfast.

Very much surprised was Philip to see her instead of her husband, and greatly concerned to hear that Guy was not well.

'Over-fatigue,' said he. 'He could not but feel the effects of such long-continued exertion.' Then, after

an interval, during which he had begun breakfast, with many apologies for letting her wait on him, he said, with some breaks, 'Never was there such a nurse as he. Amy, I have felt much more than I can express, especially now. You will never have to complain of my harsh judgment again !'

'It is too much for you to talk of these things,' said Amabel, moved by the trembling of his feeble voice, but too anxious to return to her husband to like to wait even to hear that Philip's opinion *had* altered. It required much self-command not to hurry, even by manner, her cousin's tardy, languid movements ; but she had been well trained by Charles in waiting on sick breakfasts.

When at length she was able to escape, she found that Guy had undressed, and gone to bed again. He said he was more comfortable, and desired her to go and take her own breakfast before coming back to him, and she obeyed as well as she could, but very soon was again with him. He looked flushed and oppressed, and when she put her cool hand across his forehead, she was frightened at the increased throbbing of his temples.

'Amy,' said he, looking steadily at her, 'this is the fever.'

Without answering she drew his hand into hers, and felt his pulse, which did indeed plainly respond fever. Each knew that the other was recollecting what he had said, on Sunday, of the doctor's prediction, and Amy knew he was thinking of death ; but all that passed was a proposal to send at once for the French physician. Amabel wrote her note with steadiness, derived from the very force of the shock. She could not think, she did not know whether she feared or hoped. To act from one moment to another was all she attempted, and it was well that her imagination did not open to be appalled at her own situation, so young, alone with the charge of two sick men in a foreign country ; her cousin, indeed, recovering, but helpless, and not even in a state to afford her counsel ; her husband sickening for

this frightful fever, and with more than ordinary cause for apprehension, even without the doctor's prophecy, when she thought of his slight frame, and excitable temperament, and that though never as yet tried by a day's illness, he certainly had more spirit than strength, while all the fatigue he had been undergoing was likely to tell upon him now. She did not look forward, she did not look round ; she did not hope or fear, she *trusted*, and did her best for each, as she was wanted, trying not to make herself useless to both, by showing that she wished to be in two places at once.

It was a day sufficiently distressing in itself had there been no further apprehension, for there was the restlessness of illness, working on a character too active and energetic to acquiesce without a trial in the certainty that there was no remedy for present discomfort. There was no impatience nor rebellion against the illness itself, but a wish to try one after another the things that had been effective in relieving Philip during his recovery. At the same time, he could not bear that Amabel should do anything to tire herself, and was very anxious that Philip should not be neglected. He tossed from one side to the other in burning oppression or cold chills ; Amy saw him looking wistful, suggested something by way of alleviation, then found he had been wishing for it, but refraining from asking in order to spare her, and that he was sorry when she procured it. Again and again this happened ; she smoothed the coverings, and shook up the pillow ; he would thank her, look at her anxiously, beg her not to exert herself, but soon grew restless, and the whole was repeated.

At last as she was trying to arrange the coverings, he exclaimed,—

‘I see how it is. This is impatience. Now, I will not stir for an hour,’ and as he made the resolution he smiled at treating himself so like a child. His power of self-restraint came to his aid, and long before the hour was over he had fallen asleep.

This was a relief ; yet that oppressed, flushed, discom-

posed slumber, and heavy breathings, only confirmed her fears that the fever had gained full possession of him. She had not the heart to write such tidings, at least till the physician should have made them too certain, nor could she even bear to use the word 'feverish' in her answers to the anxious inquiries Philip made whenever she went into his room, though when he averted his face with a heavy sigh, she knew his conclusion was the same as her own.

The opinion of the physician was the only thing wanting to bring home the certainty, and that fell on her like lead in the evening, with one comfort, however, that he thought it a less severe case than the former one. It was a great relief, too, that there was no wandering of mind, only the extreme drowsiness and oppression, and when Guy was roused by the doctor's visit, he was as clear and collected as possible, making inquiries and remarks, and speaking in a particularly calm and quiet manner. As soon as the doctor was gone, he looked up to Amabel, saying, with his own smile, only very dim,—

'It would be of no use, and it would not be true, to say I had rather you did not nurse me. The doctor hopes there is not much danger of infection, and it is too late for precautions.'

'I am very glad,' said Amy.

'But you must be wise, and not hurt yourself. Will you promise me not to sit up?'

'It is very kind of you to tell me nothing worse,' said she, with a sad submissiveness.

He smiled again. 'I am very sorry for you,' he said, looking tenderly at her. 'To have us both on your hands at once! But it comes straight from Heaven, that is one comfort, and you made up your mind to such things when you took me.'

Sadness in his eye, a sweet smile on his lip, and serenity on his brow, joined with the fevered cheek, the air of lassitude, and the panting, oppressed breath, there was a strange, melancholy beauty about him, and while

Amy felt an impulse of ardent, clinging affection to one so precious to her, there was joined with it a sort of awe and veneration for one who so spoke, looked, and felt. She hung over him, and sprinkled him with eau-de-Cologne; then as his hair teased him by falling into his eyes, he asked her to cut the front lock off. There was something sad in doing this, for that 'tumble-down wave,' as Charlotte called it, was rather a favourite of Amy's; it always seemed to have so much sympathy with his moods, and it was as if parting with it was resigning him to a long illness. However, it was too troublesome not to go, and he looked amused at the care with which she folded up the glossy, brown wave, and treasured it in her dressing-case, then she read to him a few verses of a psalm, and he soon fell into another doze.

There was little more of event, day after day. The fever never ran as high as in Philip's case, and there was no delirium. There was almost constant torpor, but when for any short space he was thoroughly awakened, his mind was perfectly clear, though he spoke little, and then only on the subject immediately presented to him. There he lay for one quiet hour after another, while Amy sat by him, with as little consciousness of time as he had himself, looking neither forward nor backward, only to the present, to give him drink, bathe his face and hands, arrange his pillows, or read or repeat some soothing verse. It always was a surprise when meal-times summoned her to attend to Philip, when she was asked for the letters for the post, when evening twilight gathered in, or when she had to leave the night-watch to Arnaud, and go to bed in the adjoining room.

This was a great trial, but he would not allow her to sit up, and her own sense showed her that if this was to be a long illness, it would not do to waste her strength. She knew he was quiet at night, and her trustful temper so calmed and supported her, that she was able to sleep, and thus was not as liable to be over-

worked as might have been feared, and as Philip thought she must be.

She always appeared in his room with her sweet face mournful and anxious, but never ruffled, or with any air of haste or discomfiture, desirous as she was to return to her husband, for, though he frequently sent her to take care of herself or of Philip, she knew that while she was away he always grew more restless and uncomfortable, and his look of relief at her re-entrance said as much to her as a hundred complaints of her absence would have done.

Philip was in the meantime sorely tried by being forced to be entirely inactive and dependent, while he saw Amabel in such need of assistance; and so far from being able to requite Guy's care, he could only look on himself as the cause of their distress, and an addition to it, a burthen instead of a help. If he had been told a little while ago what would be the present state of things, he would almost have laughed the speaker to scorn. He would have thought a child as competent as Amy to the sole management of two sick persons, and he not able either to advise or cheer her. Yet he could not see anything went wrong that depended on her. His comforts were so cared for that he was often sorry she should have troubled herself about them; and though he could have little of her company, he never was allowed to feel himself deserted. Anne, Arnaud, the old Italian nurse, or Amy herself, were easily summoned, and gave him full care and attention.

He was, however, necessarily a good deal alone; and though his cousins' books were at his disposal, eyes and head were too weak for reading, and he was left a prey to his own thoughts. His great comfort was that Guy was less ill than he had been himself, and that there was no present danger, otherwise, he could never have endured the conviction that all had been caused by his own imprudence. Imprudence! Philip was brought very low to own that such a word applied to

him, yet it would have been well for him had that been the chief burthen on his mind. Was it only an ordinary service of friendship and kindred that Guy had, at the peril of his own life, rendered him? Was it not a positive return of good for evil? Yes, evil! He now called that evil, or at least harshness and hastiness in judgment, which he had hitherto deemed true friendship and consideration for Guy and Amy. Every feeling of distrust and jealousy had been gradually softening since his recovery began; gratitude had done much, and dismay at Guy's illness did more. It would have been noble and generous in Guy to act as he had done, had Philip's surmises been correct, and this he began to doubt, though it was his only justification, and even to wish to lose it. He had rather believe Guy blameless. He would do so if possible, and he resolved on the first opportunity to beg him to give him one last assurance that all was right, and implicitly believe him. But how was it possible again to assume to be a ruler and judge over Guy, after it was known how egregiously he himself had erred? There was shame, sorrow, self-humiliation, and anxiety wherever he turned, and it was no wonder that depression of spirits retarded his recovery.

It was not till the tenth day after Guy's illness had begun that Philip was able to be dressed and to come into the next room, where Amabel had promised to dine with him. As he lay on the sofa she thought he looked even more ill than in bed, the change from his former appearance being rendered more visible, and his great height making him look the more thin. He was apparently exhausted with the exertion of dressing, for he was very silent all dinner-time, though Amabel could have better talked to-day than for some time past, since Guy had had some refreshing sleep, was decidedly less feverish, seemed better for nourishing food, and said that he wanted nothing but a puff of Redclyffe wind to make him well. He was pleased to

hear of Philip's step in recovery, and altogether, Amy was cheered and happy.

She left her cousin as soon as dinner was over, and did not come to him again for nearly an hour and a half. She was then surprised to find him finishing a letter, resting his head on one hand, and looking wan, weary, and very unhappy.

'Have you come to letter-writing?'

'Yes,' he answered, in a worn, dejected tone, 'I must ask you to direct this. I can't make it legible.'

No wonder, so much did his hand tremble as he held out the envelope.

'To your sister?' she asked.

'No; to yours. I never wrote to her before. There's one enclosed to your father, to tell all.'

'I am glad you have done it,' answered Amy, in a quiet tone of sincere congratulation. 'You will be better now it is off your mind. But how tired you are. You must go back to bed. Shall I call Arnaud?'

'I must rest first'—and his voice failing, he laid back on the sofa, closed his eyes, turned ashy pale, and became so faint that she could not leave him, and was obliged to apply every restorative within reach, before she could bring him back to a state of tolerable comfort.

The next minute her work was nearly undone, when Anne came in to ask for the letters for the post. 'Shall I send yours?' asked Amy.

He muttered an assent. But when she looked back to him after speaking to Anne, she saw a tremulous, almost convulsed working of the closed eyes and mouth, while the thin hands were clenched together with a force contrasting with the helpless manner in which they had hung a moment before. She guessed at the intensity of anguish it must cost a temper so proud, a heart of so strong a mould, and feelings so deep, to take the first irrevocable step in self-humiliation, giving up into the hands of others the engagement that had

hitherto been the cherished treasure of his life; and above all, in exposing Laura to bear the brunt of the penalty of the fault into which he had led her. 'Oh, for Guy to comfort him,' thought she, feeling herself entirely incompetent, dreading to intrude on his feelings, yet thinking it unkind to go away without one sympathising word, when he was in such distress.

'You will be glad, in time,' at last she said.

He made no answer.

She held the stimulants to him again, and tried to arrange him more comfortably.

'Thank you,' at last he said. 'How is Guy?'

'He has just had another nice quiet sleep, and is quite refreshed.'

'That is a blessing, at least. But does not he want you? I have been keeping you a long time.'

'Thank you; as he is awake, I should like to go back. You are better now.'

'Yes, while I don't move.'

'Don't try. I'll send Arnaud, and as soon as you can, you had better go to bed again.'

Guy was still awake, and able to hear what she had to tell him about Philip.

'Poor fellow!' said he. 'We must try to soften it.'

'Shall I write?' said Amy. 'Mamma will be pleased to hear of his having told you, and they must be sorry for him, when they hear how much the letter cost him.'

'Ah! they will not guess at half his sorrow.'

'I will write to papa, and send it after the other letters, so that he may read it before he hears of Philip's.'

'Poor Laura!' said Guy. 'Could not you write a note to her too? I want her to be told that I am very sorry, if I ever gave her pain by speaking thoughtlessly of him.'

'Nay,' said Amy, smiling, 'you have not much to reproach yourself with in that way. It was I that always abused him.'

‘You can never do so again?’

‘No; I don’t think I can, now I have seen his sorrow.’

Amabel was quite in spirits, as she brought her writing to his bedside, and read her sentences to him as she composed the letter to her father, while he suggested and approved. It was a treat indeed to have him able to consult with her once more, and he looked so much relieved and so much better, that she felt as if it was the beginning of real improvement, though still his pulse was fast, and the fever, though lessened, was not gone.

The letter was almost as much his as her own, and he ended his dictation thus: ‘Say that I am sure that if I get better we may make arrangements for their marriage.’

Then, as Amy was finishing the letter with her hopes of his amendment, he added, speaking to her, and not dictating—‘If not,’—she shrank and shivered, but did not exclaim, for he looked so calm and happy that she did not like to interrupt him—‘If not, you know it will be very easy to put the money matters to rights, whatever may happen.’

CHAPTER XII.

Sir,
It is your fault I have loved Posthumus ;
You bred him as my playfellow ; and he is
A man worth any woman, over-buys me
Almost the sum he pays.

CYMBELINE.

THE first tidings of Philip's illness arrived at Hollywell one morning at breakfast, and were thus announced by Charles :—

‘There ! So he has been and gone and done it.’

‘What ? Who ? Not Guy ?’

‘Here has the Captain gone and caught a regular bad fever in some malaria hole ; delirious, and all that sort of thing, and of course our wise brother and sister must needs go and nurse him, by way of a pretty little interlude in their wedding tour !’

Laura's voice alone was unheard in the chorus of inquiry. She sat cold, stiff, and silent, devouring with her ears each reply, that fell like a death-blow, while she was mechanically continuing the occupations of breakfast. When all was told, she hurried to her own room, but the want of sympathy was becoming intolerable. If Amabel had been at home, she must have told her all. There was no one else ; and the misery to be endured in silence was dreadful. Her dearest—her whole joy and hope—suffering, dying, and to hear all round her speaking of him with kindness, indeed, but what to her seemed indifference ; blaming him for wilfulness, saying he had drawn it on himself,—it seemed to

drive her wild. She conjured up pictures of his suffering, and dreaded Guy's inexperience, the want of medical advice, imagining everything that was terrible. Her idol, to whom her whole soul was devoted, was passing from her, and no one pitied her; while the latent consciousness of disobedience debarred her from gaining solace from the only true source. All was blank desolation—a wild agony, untempered by resignation, uncheered by prayer; for though she did pray, it was without trust, without hope, while her wretchedness was rendered more overwhelming by her efforts to conceal it. These were so far ineffectual that no one could help perceiving that she was extremely unhappy; but then all the family knew she was very fond of Philip, and neither her mother nor brother could be surprised at her distress, though it certainly appeared to them excessive. Mrs. Edmonstone was very sorry for her, and very affectionate and considerate; but Laura was too much absorbed in her own feelings to perceive or to be grateful for her kindness; and as each day brought a no better report, her despair became so engrossing that she could not attempt any employment. She wandered in the garden, sat in dreamy fits of silence in the house, and at last, after receiving one of the worst accounts, sat up in her dressing-gown the whole of one night, in one dull, heavy, motionless trance of misery.

She recollected that she must act her part, dressed in the morning and came down; but her looks were ghastly; she tasted no food, and as soon as possible left the breakfast-room. Her mother was going in quest of her when old nurse came with an anxious face to say,—‘Ma’am, I am afraid Miss Edmonstone must be very ill, or something. Do you know, ma’am, her bed has not been slept in all night.’

‘You don’t say so, nurse!’

‘Yes, ma’am, Jane told me so, and I went to look myself. Poor child, she is half distracted about master Philip, and no wonder, for they were always together:

but I thought you ought to know, ma'am, for she will make herself ill to a certainty.'

'I am going to see about her this moment, nurse,' said Mrs. Edmonstone; and presently she found Laura wandering up and down the shady walk, in the restlessness of her despair.

'Laura, dearest,' said she, putting her arm round her, 'I cannot bear to see you so unhappy.'

Laura did not answer; for though solitude was oppressive, every one's presence was a burthen.

'I cannot think it right to give way thus,' continued her mother. 'Did you really sit up all night, my poor child?'

'I don't know. They did so with him!'

'My dear, this will never do. You are making yourself seriously unwell.'

'I wish—I wish I was ill; I wish I was dying!' broke from Laura, almost unconsciously, in a hoarse, inward voice.

'My dear! You don't know what you are saying. You forget that this self-abandonment, and extravagant grief would be wrong in any one; and, if nothing else, the display is unbecoming in you.'

Laura's over-wrought feelings could bear no more, and in a tone which though too vehement to be addressed to a parent, had in it an agony which almost excused it, by showing how unable she was to restrain herself, she broke forth:—'Unbecoming! Who has a right to grieve for him but me?—his own, his chosen,—the only one who can love him, or understand him.' Her voice died away in a sob, though without tears.

Her mother heard the words, but did not take in their full meaning; and, believing that Laura's undeveloped affection had led her to this uncontrolled grief, she spoke again, with coldness, intended to rouse her to a sense that she was compromising her womanly dignity.

'Take care, Laura; a woman has no right to speak in such a manner of a man, who has given her no reason to believe in his preference of her.'

‘Preference! It is his love!—his love! His whole heart! The one thing that was precious to me in this world! Preference! You little guess what we have felt for each other!’

‘Laura!’ Mrs. Edmonstone stood still, overpowered. ‘What do you mean?’ She could not put the question more plainly.

‘What have I done?’ cried Laura. ‘I have betrayed him!’ she answered herself in a tone of despair, as she hid her face in her hands; ‘betrayed him when he is dying!’

Her mother was too much shocked to speak in the soft, reluctant manner in which she was wont to reprove.

‘Laura,’ said she, ‘I must understand this. What has passed between you and Philip?’

Laura only replied by a flood of tears, ungovernable from the exhaustion of sleeplessness and want of food. Mrs. Edmonstone’s kindness returned; she soothed her, begged her to control herself, and at length brought her into the house, and up to the dressing-room, where she sank on the sofa, weeping violently. It was the reaction of the long restraint she had been exercising on herself, and the silence she had been maintaining. She was not feeling the humiliation of her own acknowledgment of disobedience, but of the horror of being forced to reveal the secret he had left in her charge.

Long did she weep, breaking out more piteously at each attempt of her mother to lead her to explain. Poor Mrs. Edmonstone was alarmed and perplexed beyond measure; this half-confession had so overthrown all her ideas that she was ready to apprehend everything most improbable, and almost expected to hear of a private marriage. Her presence seemed only to make Laura worse, and at length she said,—‘I shall leave you for half an hour, in hopes that by that time you may have recovered yourself, and be able to give the explanation which I *require*.’

She went into her own room, and waited, with her eyes

on her watch, a prey to every strange alarm and anticipation, grievously hurt at this want of confidence, and wounded, where she least expected it, by both daughter and nephew. She thought, guessed, recollected, wondered, tormented herself, and at the last of the thirty minutes, hastily opened the door into the dressing-room. Laura sat, as before, crouched up in the corner of the wide sofa; and when she raised her face, at her mother's entrance, it was bewildered rather than embarrassed.

'Well, Laura?' She waited unanswered; and the wretchedness of the look so touched her, that, kissing her, she said, 'Surely, my dear, you need not be afraid to tell me anything?'

Laura did not respond to the kindness, but asked, looking perplexed, 'What have I said? Have I told it?'

'What? You have given me reason to believe,' said Mrs. Edmonstone, trying to bring herself to speak it, explicitly, 'that you think Philip is attached to you. You do not deny it. Let me know on what terms you stand.'

Without looking up, she murmured, 'If you would not force it from me at such a time.'

'Laura, it is for your own good. You are wretched now, my poor child; why not relieve yourself by telling all? If you have not acted openly, can you have any comfort till you have confessed? It may be a painful effort, but relief will come afterwards.'

'I have nothing to confess,' said Laura. 'There is no such thing as you think.'

'No engagement?'

'No.'

'Then what am I to understand by your exclamations?'

'It is no engagement,' repeated Laura. 'He would never have asked that without papa's consent. We are only bound by our own hearts.'

'And you have a secret understanding with him?'

‘We have never written to each other; we have never dreamed of any intercourse that could be called clandestine. He would scorn it. He waited only for his promotion, to declare it to papa.’

‘And how long has it been declared to you?’

‘Ever since the first summer Guy was here.’

‘Three years!’ exclaimed her mother. ‘You have kept this from me three years! O Laura!’

‘It was of no use to speak!’ said Laura, faintly.

If she had looked up, she would have seen those words, ‘no use,’ cut her mother more deeply than all; but there was only coldness in the tone of the answer, ‘No use to inform your parents, before you pledged your affections!’

‘Indeed, mamma,’ said Laura, ‘I was sure that you knew his worth.’

‘Worth! when he was teaching you to live in a course of insincerity? Your father will be deeply hurt.’

‘Papa! Oh, you must not tell him! Now, I have betrayed him, indeed! Oh, my weakness!’ and another paroxysm of tears came on.

‘Laura, you seem to think you owe nothing to any one but Philip. You forget you are a daughter! that you have been keeping up a system of disobedience and concealment, of which I could not have believed a child of mine could be capable. O Laura, how you have abused our confidence!’

Laura was touched by the sorrow of her tone; and, throwing her arms round her neck, sobbed out, ‘You will forgive me, only forgive him!’

Mrs. Edmonstone was softened in a moment. ‘Forgive you, my poor child! You have been very unhappy!’ and she kissed her, with many tears.

‘Must you tell papa?’ whispered Laura.

‘Judge for yourself, Laura. Could I know such a thing, and hide it from him?’

Laura ceased, seeing her determined, and yielded to her pity, allowing herself to be nursed as she required, so exhausted was she. She was laid on the sofa, and

made comfortable with pillows, in her mother's gentlest way. When Mrs. Edmonstone was called away, Laura held her dress, saying, 'You are kind to me; but you must forgive him. Say you have forgiven him, mamma, dearest!'

'My dear, in the grave all things are forgiven.'

She could not help saying so; but, feeling as if she had been cruel, she added, 'I mean while he is so ill, we cannot enter on such a matter. I am very sorry for you,' proceeded she, still arranging for Laura's ease; then kissing her, hoped she would sleep, and left her

Sympathy was a matter of necessity to Mrs. Edmonstone; and as her husband was out, she went at once to Charles, with a countenance so disturbed, that he feared some worse tidings had come from Italy.

'No, no, nothing of that sort; it is poor Laura.'

'Eh?' said Charles, with a significant though anxious look, that caused her to exclaim,—

'Surely you had no suspicion!'

Charlotte, who was reading in the window, trembled lest she should be seen, and sent away.

'I suspected poor Laura had parted with her heart. But what do you mean? What has happened?'

'Could you have guessed? but first remember how ill he is; don't be violent, Charlie. Could you have guessed that they have been engaged, ever since the summer we first remarked them?'

She had expected a great storm; but Charles only observed, very coolly, 'Oh! it is come out at last!'

'You don't mean that you knew it?'

'No, indeed; you don't think they would choose me for their confidant?'

'Not exactly,' said Mrs. Edmonstone, with the odd sort of laugh with which even the most sensitive people, in the height of their troubles, reply to anything ludicrous; 'but really,' she continued, 'every idea of mine is so turned upside-down, that I don't know what to think of anybody.'

‘We always knew Laura to be his slave and automaton. He is so infallible in her eyes, that no doubt she thought her silence an act of praiseworthy resolution.’

‘She was a mere child, poor dear,’ said her mother; ‘only eighteen! Yet Amy was but a year older last summer. How unlike! She must have known what she was doing.’

‘Not with her senses surrendered to him, without volition of her own. I wonder by what magnetism he allowed her to tell?’

‘She has gone through a great deal, poor child, and I am afraid there is much more for her to suffer, whether he recovers or not.’

‘He will recover,’ said Charles, with the decided manner in which people prophecy the restoration of those they dislike, probably from a feeling that they must not die, till there is more charity in their opinion of them.

‘Your father will be so grieved!’

‘Well, I suppose we must begin to make the best of it,’ said Charles. ‘She has been as good as married to him these four years, for any use she has been to us; it has been only the name of the thing; so he had better——’

‘My dear Charlie, what are you talking of? You don’t imagine they can marry?’

‘They will some time or other; for assuredly neither will marry any one else. You will see if Guy does not take up the cause, and return Philip’s meddling—which, by-the-bye, is now shown to have been more preposterous still—by setting their affairs in order for them.’

‘Dear Guy, it is a comfort not to have been deceived in him!’

‘Except when you believed Philip,’ said Charles.

‘Could anything have been more different?’ proceeded Mrs. Edmonstone; ‘yet the two girls had the same training.’

‘With an important exception,’ said Charles; ‘Laura is Philip’s pupil, Amy mine; and I think her little ladyship is the best turned out of hand.’

‘How shocked Amy will be! If she was but here, it would be much better, for she always had more of Laura’s confidence than I. Oh, Charlie, there has been the error!’ and Mrs. Edmonstone’s eyes were full of tears. ‘What fearful mistake have I made to miss my daughter’s confidence?’

‘You must not ask me, mother,’ said Charles, face and voice full of affectionate emotion. ‘I know too well that I have been exacting and selfish, taking too much advantage of your anxieties for me, and that if you were not enough with my sisters when they were young girls, it was my fault as much as my misfortune. But, after all, it has not hurt Amy in the least; nor do I think it will hurt Charlotte.’

Charlotte did not venture to give way to her desire to kiss her mother, and thank Charles, lest she should be exiled as an intruder.

‘And,’ proceeded Charles, serious, though somewhat roguish, ‘I suspect that no attention would have made much difference. You were always too young, and Laura too much addicted to the physical sciences to get on together.’

‘A weak, silly mother!’ sighed Mrs. Edmonstone.

This was too much for Charlotte, who sprang forward, and flung her arms round her neck, sobbing out,—

‘Mamma! dear mamma! don’t say such horrid things! No one is half so wise or so good,—I am sure Guy thinks so too!’

At the same time Bustle, perceiving a commotion, made a leap, planted his forefeet on Mrs. Edmonstone’s lap, wagging his tail vehemently, and trying to lick her face. It was not in human nature not to laugh, and Mrs. Edmonstone did so as heartily as either of the young ones; indeed, Charlotte was the first to resume her gravity, not being sure of her ground, and being hurt at her

impulse of affection being thus reduced to the absurd. She began to apologise,—

‘Dear mamma, I could not help it. I thought you knew I was in the room.’

‘My dear child,’ and her mother kissed her warmly, ‘I don’t want to hide anything from you. You are my only home-daughter now.’ Then recollecting her prudence, she proceeded.—‘You are old enough to understand the distress this insincerity of poor Laura’s has occasioned, and now that Amy is gone, we must look to you to comfort us.’

Did ever maiden of fourteen feel more honoured, and obliged to be very good and wise than Charlotte, as she knelt by her mother’s side? Happily tact was coming with advancing years, and she did not attempt to mingle in the conversation, which was resumed by Charles observing that the strangest part of the affair was the incompatibility of so novelish and imprudent a proceeding with the cautious, thoughtful character of both parties. It was, he said, analogous to a pentagon flirting with a hexagon; whereas Guy, a knight of the Round Table, in name and nature, and Amy, with her little superstitions, had been attached in the most matter-of-fact, hum-drum way, and were in a course of living very happy ever after, for which nature could never have designed them. Mrs. Edmonstone smiled, sighed, hoped they were prudent, and wondered whether camphor and chloride of lime were attainable at Recoara.

Laura came down no more that day, for she was worn out with agitation, and it was a relief to be sufficiently unwell to be excused facing her father and Charles. She had little hope that Charlotte had not heard all; but she might seem to believe her ignorant, and could, therefore, endure her waiting on her, with an elaborate kindness and compassion, and tip-toe silence, far beyond the deserts of her slight indisposition.

In the evening, Charles and his mother broke the tidings to Mr. Edmonstone as gently as they could, Charles feeling bound to be the cool, thinking head in the family. Of course Mr. Edmonstone stormed, vowed that he could not have believed it, then veered round, and said he could have predicted it from the first. It was all mamma's fault for letting him be so intimate with the girls—how was a poor lad to be expected not to fall in love? Next he broke out into great wrath at the abuse of his confidence, then at the interference with Guy, then at the intolerable presumption of Philip's thinking of Laura. He would soon let him know what he thought of it! When reminded of Philip's present condition, he muttered an Irish imprecation on the fever for interfering with his anger, and abused the 'romantic folly' that had carried Guy to nurse him at Recoara. He was not so much displeased with Laura; in fact, he thought all young ladies always ready to be fallen in love with, and hardly accountable for what their lovers might make them do, and he pitied her heartily, when he heard of her sitting up all night. Anything of extravagance in love met with sympathy from him, and there was no effort in his hearty forgiveness of her. He vowed that she should give the fellow up, and had she been present, would have tried to make her do so at a moment's warning; but in process of time he was convinced that he must not persecute her while Philip was in extremity, and though, like Charles, he scorned the notion of his death, and, as if it was an additional crime, pronounced him to be as strong as a horse, he was quite ready to put off all proceedings till his recovery, being glad to defer the evil day of making her cry.

So when Laura ventured out, she met with nothing harsh; indeed, but for the sorrowful kindness of her family towards her, she could hardly have guessed that they knew her secret.

Her heart leapt when Amabel's letter was silently handed to her, and she saw the news of Philip's amend-

ment; but a sickening feeling succeeded, that soon all forbearance would be at an end, and he must hear that her weakness had betrayed his secret. For the present, however, nothing was said, and she continued in silent dread of what each day might bring forth, till one afternoon, when the letters had been fetched from Broadstone, Mrs. Edmonstone, with an exclamation of dismay, read aloud:—

‘Recoara, September 8th.

‘DEAREST MAMMA,—Don’t be very much frightened when I tell you that Guy has caught the fever. He has been ailing since Sunday, and yesterday became quite ill; but we hope it will not be so severe an illness as Philip’s was. He sleeps a great deal, and is in no pain, quite sensible when he is awake. Arnaud is very useful, and so is Anne; and he is so quiet at night, that he wants no one but Arnaud, and will not let me sit up with him. Philip is better.

‘Your most affectionate,
‘A. F. M.’

The reading was followed by a dead silence, then Mr. Edmonstone said he had always known how it would be, and what would poor Amy do?

Mrs. Edmonstone was too unhappy to answer, for she could see no means of helping them. Mr. Edmonstone was of no use in a sick-room, and she had never thought it possible to leave Charles. It did not even occur to her that she could do so till Charles himself suggested that she must go to Amy.

‘Can you spare me?’ said she, as if it was a new light.

‘Why not? Who can be thought of but Amy? She ought not to be a day longer without you.’

‘Dr. Mayerne would look in on you,’ said she, considering, ‘and Laura can manage for you.’

‘Oh, I shall do very well. Do you think I could bear to keep you from her?’

‘Some one must go,’ said Mrs. Edmonstone; ‘and

even if I could think of letting Laura run the risk, this unhappy affair about Philip puts her going out of the question.'

'No one but you can go,' said Charles; 'it is of no use to talk of anything else.'

It was settled that if the next account was not more favourable, Mr. and Mrs. Edmonstone should set off for Recoara. Laura heard, in consternation, at the thought of her father's meeting Philip, still weak and unwell, without her, and perhaps with Guy too ill to be consulted. And oh! what would Philip think of her? Her weakness had disclosed his secret, and sunk her beneath him, and he must hear it from others. She felt as if she could have thrown herself at her mother's feet as she implored her to forbear, to spare him, to spare her. Her mother pitied her incoherent distress, but it did not make her feel more in charity with Philip. She would not promise that the subject should not be discussed, but she tried to re-assure Laura, by saying, that nothing should be done that could retard his recovery.

With this Laura was obliged to content herself; and early the second morning, after the letter arrived, she watched the departure of her father and mother.

She had expected to find the care of Charles very anxious work, but she prospered beyond her hopes. He was very kind and considerate, and both he and Charlotte were so sobered by anxiety, that there was no fear of their spirits overpowering her.

Mary Ross used to come almost every afternoon to inquire. One day she found Charles alone, crutching himself slowly along the terrace, and she thought nothing showed the forlorn state of the family so much as to see him out of doors with no one for a prop.

'Mary! Just as I wanted you!'

'What account?' said she, taking the place of one of the crutches.

'Excellent; the fever and drowsiness seem to be going off. It must have been a light attack, and the

elders will hardly come in time for mamma to have any nursing. So there's Guy pretty well off one's mind.'

'And Amy?'

'This was such a long letter, and so cheerful, that she must be all right. What I wanted to speak to you about was Laura. You know the state of things. Well, the captain—I wish he was not so sorry, it deprives one of the satisfaction of abusing him—the captain, it seems was brought to his senses by his illness, confessed all to Guy, and now has written to tell the whole truth to my father.'

'Has he? That is a great relief!'

'Not that I have seen his letter; Laura ran away with it, and has not said a word of it. I know it from one to papa from Amy, trying to make the best of it, and telling how thoroughly he is cut up. She says he all but fainted after writing. Fancy that poor little thing with a great man, six foot one, fainting away on her hands!'

'I thought he was pretty well again.'

'He must be to have written at all, and a pretty tolerably bitter pill it must have been to set about it. What a thing for him to have had to tell Guy, of all people—I do enjoy that! So, of course, Guy takes up his cause, and sends a message, that is worth anything, as showing he is himself better, though in any one else it would be a proof of delirium. My two brothers-in-law might sit for a picture of the contrast.'

'Then you think Mr. Edmonstone will consent?'

'To be sure; we shall have him coming home, saying—

It is a fine thing to be father-in-law

To a very magnificent three-tailed bashaw.

He will never hold out against Guy and Amy, and Philip will soon set up a patent revolver, to be turned by the little god of love on the newest scientific principles.'

'Where is Laura?' said Mary, smiling.

'I turned her out to walk with Charlotte, and I

want some counsel, as mamma says I know nothing of lovers.'

'Because I know so much?'

'You know feminine nature. I want to know what is the best thing to do for Laura. Poor thing! I can't bear to see her look so wretched, worrying herself with care of me. I have done the best I could by taking Charlotte's lessons, and sending her out to mope alone, as she likes best; but I wish you would tell me how to manage her.'

'I know nothing better for her than waiting on you.'

'That's hard,' said Charles, 'that having made the world dance attendance on me for my pleasure, I must now do it for theirs. But what do you think about telling her of this letter, or showing it, remembering that not a word about her troubles has passed between us?'

By all means tell her. You must judge about showing it, but I should think the opening for talking to her on the subject a great gain.'

'Should you? What, thinking as I do of the man? Should I not be between the horns of a dilemma if I had to speak the honest truth, yet not hurt her feelings?'

'She has been so long shut up from sympathy, that any proof of kindness must be a comfort.'

'Well, I should like to do her some good; but it will be a mercy, if she does not make me fall foul of Philip! I can get up a little Christian charity, when my father or Charlotte rave at him, but I can't stand hearing him praised. I take the opportunity of saying so while I can, for I expect he will come home as her betrothed, and then we shall not be able to say one word.'

'No, I dare say he will be so altered and subdued that you will not be so disposed to rail. This confession is a grand thing. Good-bye; I must get back to church. Poor Laura! how busy she has been about her sketch there lately.'

'Yes, she has been eager about finishing it ever since

Guy began to be ill. Good-by. Wish me well through my part of confidant to-night. It is much against the grain, though I would give something to cheer up my poor sister.'

'I am sure you would,' thought Mary to herself, as she looked back at him: 'what a quantity of kind, right feeling there is under that odd, dry manner, that strives to appear to love nothing but a joke.'

As soon as Charlotte was gone to bed, Charles, in accordance with his determination, said to Laura,—

'Have you any fancy for seeing Amy's letter?'

'Thank you;' and, without speaking, Laura took it. He forbore to watch her expression as she read. When she had finished, her face was fixed in silent unhappiness.

'He has been suffering a great deal, I am sure,' said Charles, kindly. It was the first voluntary word of compassion towards Philip that Laura had heard, and it was as grateful as unexpected. Her face softened, and tears gushed from her eyes as she said,—

'You do not know how much! There he is grieving for me! thinking they will be angry with me, and hurting himself with that! Oh! if this had but come before they set off!'

'Guy and Amy will tell them of his having written.'

'Dear, dear Guy and Amy! He speaks so earnestly of their kindness. I don't fear it so much now he and Guy understand each other.'

Recollecting her love, Charles refrained, only saying, 'You can rely on their doing everything to make it better.'

'I can hardly bear to think of what we owe to them,' said Laura. 'How glad I am that Amy was there after he wrote, when he was so much overcome! Amy has written me such a very kind note; I think you must see that—it is so like her own dear self.'

She gave it to him, and he read:—

'MY DEAREST,—I never could tell you before how we

have grieved for you ever since we knew it. I am so sorry I wrote such dreadful accounts, and Guy says he wants to ask your pardon if he ever said anything that pained you about Philip. I understand all your unhappiness now, my poor dear, but it will be better now it is known. Don't be reserved with Charlie, pray, for if he sees you are unhappy, he will be so very kind. I have just seen Philip again, and found him rested and better. He is only anxious about you, but I tell him I know you will be glad it is told.

‘Your most affectionate sister,

‘A. F. M.’

‘Laura,’ said Charles, finishing the letter, ‘Amy gives you very good advice, as far as I am concerned. I do want to be of as much use to you as I can—I mean as kind.’

‘I know—I know; thank you,’ said Laura, struggling with her tears. ‘You have been—you are; but—’

‘Ay,’ thought Charles, ‘I see, she won’t be satisfied, if my kindness includes her alone. What will my honesty let me say to please her? Oh! I know.—You must not expect me to say that Philip has behaved properly, Laura; nothing but being in love could justify such a delusion; but I do say that there is greatness of mind in his confessing it, especially at a time when he could put it off, and is so unequal to agitation.’

It was the absence of any tone of satire that made this speech come home to Laura, as it was meant. There was no grudging in the praise, and she answered, in a very low, broken voice,—

‘You will think so still more when you see this note; which he sent open, inside mine, to be given to papa when I had told my own story. Oh, his considerateness for me!’

She gave it to him. The address, ‘C. Edmonstone, Esq.,’ was a mere scrawl, and within the writing was very trembling and weak. Charles remarked it, and

she answered by saying that her own letter began in his own strong hand, but failed and grew shaky at the end, as if from fatigue and agitation. The words were few, brief, and simple, very unlike his usual manner of letter-writing.

‘MY DEAR UNCLE,—My conduct has been unjustifiable—I feel it. Do not visit it on Laura—I alone should suffer. I entreat your pardon, and my aunt’s, and leave all to you. I will write more at length. Be kind to her.—Yours affectionately,

‘Ph. M.’

‘Poor Philip!’ said Charles, really very much touched.

From that moment, Laura no longer felt completely isolated, and deprived of sympathy. She sat by Charles till late that night, and told him the whole history of her engagement, much relieved by the outpouring of her long-hidden griefs, and comforted by his kindness, though he could not absolutely refrain from words and gestures of censure. It was as strange that Charles should be the first person to whom Laura told this history, as that Guy should have been Philip’s first confidant.

CHAPTER XIII.

There is a Rock, and nigh at hand,
A shadow in a weary land,
Who in that stricken Rock hath rest,
Finds water gushing from its breast.

NEALE.

IN the meantime the days passed at Recoara without much change for the better or worse. After the first week, Guy's fever had diminished; his pulse was lower, the drowsiness ceased, and it seemed as if there was nothing to prevent absolute recovery. But though each morning seemed to bring improvement, it never lasted; the fever, though not high, could never be entirely reduced, and strength was perceptibly wasting, in spite of every means of keeping it up.

There was not much positive suffering, very little even of headache, and he was cheerful, though speaking little, because he was told not to excite or exhaust himself. Languor and lassitude were the chief causes of discomfort; and as his strength failed, there came fits of exhaustion and oppression that tried him severely. At first, these were easily removed by stimulants; but remedies seemed to lose their effect, and the sinking was almost deathlike.

'I think I could bear acute pain better!' he said one day; and more than once the sigh broke from him almost unconsciously,—'Oh for one breath of Redclyffe seawind!' Indeed, it seemed as if the close air of the shut-in valley, at the end of a long hot day, was almost enough to overwhelm him, weak as he had become. Every morning, when Amabel let in the fresh breeze at the window, she predicted it would be a cool day, and do him good; every afternoon, the wind abated, the

sun shone full in, the room was stifling, the faintness came on, and after a few vain attempts at relieving it, Guy sighed that there was nothing for it but quiet, and Amy was obliged to acquiesce. As the sun set, the breeze sprung up, it became cooler, he fell asleep, awoke revived, was comfortable all the evening, and Amy left him at eleven or twelve, with hopes of his having a good night.

It seemed to her as if ages had passed in this way, when one evening, two letters were brought in.

‘From mamma!’ said she; ‘and this one,’ holding it up, ‘is for you. It must have been hunting us everywhere. How many different directions!’

‘From Markham,’ said Guy. ‘It must be the letter we were waiting for.’

The letter to tell them Redclyffe was ready to receive them! Amabel put it down with a strange sensation, and opened her mother’s. With a start of joy she exclaimed,—

‘They are coming,—mamma and papa!’

‘Then all is right!’

‘If we do not receive a much better account,’ read Amy, ‘we shall set off early on Wednesday, and hope to be with you not long after you receive this letter.’

‘Oh, I am so glad!’ I wonder how Charlie gets on without her?’

‘It is a great comfort,’ said Guy.

‘Now you will see what a nurse mamma is!’

‘Now you will be properly cared for.’

‘How nice it will be! She will take care of you all night, and never be tired, and devise everything I am too stupid for, and make you so comfortable!’

‘Nay, no one could do that better than you, Amy. But it is joy, indeed,—to see mamma again—to know you are safe with her. Every thing comes to make it easy!’ The last words were spoken very low; and she did not disturb him by saying anything till he asked about the rest of the letter, and desired her to read Markham’s to him.

This cost her some pain, for it had been written in

ignorance of even Philip's illness, and detailed triumphantly the preparations at Redclyffe, hinting that they must send timely notice of their return, or they would disappoint the tenantry, who intended grand doings, and concluding with a short lecture on the inexpediency of lingering in foreign parts.

'Poor Markham,' said Guy.

She understood; but these things did not come on her like a shock now, for he had been saying them more or less ever since the beginning of his illness; and fully occupied as she was, she never opened her mind to the future. After a long silence, Guy said,—

'I am very sorry for him. I have been making Arnaud write to him for me.'

'Oh, have you?'

'It was better for you not to do it, Arnaud has written for me at night. You will send it, Amy, and another to my poor uncle.'

'Very well,' said she, as he looked at her.

'I have told Markham,' said he, presently, 'to send you my desk. There are all sorts of things in it, just as I threw them in, when I cleared out my rooms at Oxford. I had rather nobody but you saw some of them. There is nothing of any importance, so you may look at them when you please, or not at all.'

She gazed at him without answering. If there had been any struggle to retain him, it would have been repressed by his calmness; but the thought had not come on her suddenly, it was more like an inevitable fate seen at first at a distance, and gradually advancing upon her. She had never fastened on the hope of his recovery, and it had dwindled in an almost imperceptible manner. She kept watch over him, and followed his thoughts, without stretching her mind to suppose herself living without him; and was supported by the forgetfulness of self, which gave her no time to realise her feelings.

'I should like to have seen Redclyffe bay again,' said Guy, after a space. 'Now that mamma is coming,

that is the one thing. I suppose I had set my heart on it, for it comes back to me how I reckoned on standing on that rock with you, feeling the wind, hearing the surge, looking at the meeting of earth and sky, and the train of sunlight.' He spoke slowly, pausing between each recollection,—'You will see it some day,' he added. 'But I must give it up; it is earth after all, and looking back.'

Through the evening, he seemed to be dwelling on thoughts of his own, and only spoke to tell her of some message to friends at Redclyffe or Hollywell, to mention little Marianne Dixon, or some other charge that he wished to leave. She thought he had mentioned almost every one with whom he had had any interchange of kindness at either of his homes, even to old nurse at Hollywell, remembering them all with quiet pleasure. At half-past eleven, he sent her to bed, and she went submissively, cheered by thinking him likely to sleep.

As soon as she could conscientiously call the night over, she returned to him, and was received with one of the sweet, sunny, happy looks that had always been his peculiar charm, and, of late, had acquired an expression almost startling from their very beauty and radiance. It was hardly to be termed a smile, for there was very little, if any, movement of the lips, it was more like the reflection of some glory upon the whole countenance.

'You have had a good night?' she said.

'I have had my wish, I have seen Redclyffe;' then, seeing her look startled, 'Of course, it was a sort of wandering; but I never quite lost the consciousness of being here, and it was very delightful. I saw the waves, each touched with light,—the foam—the sea-birds, floating in shade and light,—the trees—the Shag—the sky—oh! such a glory as I never knew—themselves—but so intensely glorious!'

'I am glad,' said Amabel, with a strange participation of the delight it had given him.

‘I don’t understand such goodness!’ he continued. ‘As if it were not enough to look to heaven beyond, to have this longing gratified, which I thought I ought to conquer. Oh, Amy! is not that being Fatherly?’

‘Yes, indeed.’

‘Now after that, and with mamma’s coming (for you will have her if I don’t see her), I have but one wish unfulfilled.’

‘Ah! a clergyman.’

‘Yes; but if that is withheld, I must believe it is rightly ordered. We must think of that Sunday at Stylehurst, and Christmas-day, and that last time at Munich.’

‘Oh, I am so glad we staid at Munich for that!’

‘Those were times, indeed! and many more. Yes; I have been a great deal too much favoured already, and now to be allowed to die just as I should have chosen——’

He broke off to take what Amabel was preparing for him, and she felt his pulse. There was fever still, which probably supplied the place of strength, for he said he was very comfortable, and his eyes were as bright as ever; but the beats were weak and fluttering, and a thrill crossed her that *it* might be near; but she must attend to him, and could not think.

When it was time for her to go down to breakfast with Philip, Guy said, ‘Do you think Philip could come to me to-day? I want much to speak to him.’

‘I am sure he could.’

‘Then pray ask him to come, if it will not tire him very much.’

Philip had, the last two mornings, risen in time to breakfast with Amabel, in the room adjoining his own; he was still very weak, and attempted no more than crossing the room, and sitting in the balcony to enjoy the evening air. He had felt the heat of the weather severely, and had been a good deal thrown back by his fatigue and agitation the day he wrote the letter, while also anxiety for Guy was retarding his progress, though

he only heard the best side of his condition. Besides all this, his repentance both for his conduct with regard to Laura and the hard measure he had dealt to Guy was pressing on him increasingly; and the warm feelings, hardened and soured by early disappointment, regained their force, and grew into a love and admiration that made it still more horrible to perceive that he had acted ungenerously towards his cousin.

When he heard of Guy's desire to see him, he was pleased, said he was quite able to walk up stairs, had been thinking of offering to help her by sitting with him, and was very glad to hear he was well enough to wish for a visit. She saw she must prepare him for what the conversation was likely to be.

'He is very anxious to see you,' she said. 'He is wishing to set all in order. And if he does speak about—about dying, will you be so kind as not to contradict him?'

'There is no danger?' cried Philip, starting, with a sort of agony. 'He is no worse? You said the fever was lower.'

'He is rather better, I think; but he wishes so much to have everything arranged, that I am sure it will be better for him to have it off his mind. So, will you bear it, please Philip?' ended she, with an imploring look, that reminded him of her childhood.

'How do you bear it?' he asked.

'I don't know—I can't vex him.'

Philip said no more, and only asked when he should come.

'In an hour's time, perhaps, or whenever he was ready,' she said, 'for he could rest in the sitting-room before coming in to Guy.'

He found mounting the stairs harder than he had expected; and, with aching knees and gasping breath, at length reached the sitting-room, where Anabel was ready to pity him, and made him rest on the sofa till he had fully recovered. She then conducted him in; and his first glance gave him infinite relief, for he saw

far less change than was still apparent in himself. Guy's face was at all times too thin to be capable of losing much of its form; and as he was liable to be very much tanned, the brown, fixed on his face by the sunshine of his journey, had not gone off, and a slight flush on his cheeks gave him his ordinary colouring; his beautiful hazel eyes were more brilliant than ever; and though the hand he held out was hot and wasted, Philip could not think him nearly as ill as he had been himself, and was ready to let him talk as he pleased. He was reassured, too, by his bright smile, and the strength of his voice, as he spoke a few playful words of welcome and congratulation. Amy set a chair, and with a look to remind Philip to be cautious, glided into her own room, leaving the door open, so as to see and hear all that passed, for they were not fit to be left absolutely alone together.

Philip sat down; and after a little pause Guy began:

'There were a few things I wanted to say, in case you should be my successor at Redclyffe.'

A horror came over Philip; but he saw Amy writing at her little table, and felt obliged to refrain.

'I don't think of directing you,' said Guy. 'You will make a far better landlord than I; but one or two things I should like.'

'Anything you wish!'

'Old Markham. He has old-world notions and prejudices; but his soul is in the family and estate. His heart will be half broken for me, and if he loses his occupation, he will be miserable. Will you bear with him, and be patient while he lives, even if he is cross and absurd in his objections, and jealous of all that is not me?'

'Yes—yes—if——'

'Thank you. Then there is Coombe Prior. I took Wellwood's pay on myself. Will you? And I should like him to have the living. Then there is the school to be built; and I thought of enclosing that bit of waste, to make gardens for the people; but that you'll

do much better. Well; don't you remember when you were at Redclyffe last year (Philip winced), telling Markham that bit of green by Sally's gate ought to be taken into the park? I hope you won't do that, for it is the only place the people have to turn out their cows and donkeys. And you won't cut them off from the steps from the Cove, for it saves the old people from being late for Church? Thank you. As to the rest, it is pleasant to think it will be in such hands, if——'

That 'if' gave Philip some comfort, though it did not mean what he fancied. He thought of Guy's recovery; Guy referred to the possibility of Amabel's guardianship.

'Amy has a list of the old people who have had so much a week, or their cottages rent free,' said Guy. 'If it comes to you, you will not let them feel the difference. And don't turn off the old keeper, Brown; he is of no use, but it would kill him. And Ben Robinson, who was so brave in the shipwreck, a little notice now and then would keep him straight. Will you tell him I hope he will never forget that morning-service after the wreck? He may be glad to think of it when he is as I am now. You tell him, for he will mind more what comes from a man.'

All this had been spoken with pauses for recollection, and for Philip's signs of assent. Amabel came to give him some cordial, and as soon as she had retreated he went on:—

'My poor uncle; I have written—that is, caused Arnaud to write to him. I hope this may sober him; but one great favour I have to ask of you. I can't leave him money, it would only be a temptation; but will you keep an eye on him, and let Amy rely on you to tell her when to help him? I can't ask any one else, and she cannot do it for herself; but you would do it well. A little kindness might save him, and you don't know how generous a character it is, run to waste. Will you undertake this?

‘To be sure I will!’

‘Thank you very much. You will judge rightly; but he has delicate feelings. Yes, really; and take care you don’t run against them.’

Another silence followed; after which Guy said, smiling, with his natural playfulness, ‘One thing more. You are the lawyer of the family, and I want a legal opinion. I have been making Arnaud write my will. I have wished Miss Wellwood of St. Mildred’s to have some money for a sisterhood she wants to establish. Now, should I leave it to herself or name trustees?’

Philip heard as if a flash of light was blinding him, and he interrupted with an exclamation:—

‘Tell me one thing! Was that the thousand pounds?’

‘Yes. I was not at liberty to——’

He stopped for he was unheard. At the first word Philip had sunk on his knees, hiding his face on the bed-clothes, in an agony of self-abasement, before the goodness he had been relentlessly persecuting.

‘It was that!’ he said, in a sort of stifled sob. ‘Oh, can you forgive me?’

He could not look up; but he felt Guy’s hand touch his head, and heard him say, ‘That was done long ago. Even as you pardoned my fierce rage against you, which I trust is forgiven above. It has been repented!’

As he spoke there was a knock at the door, and with the instinctive dread of being found in his present posture, Philip sprang to his feet. Amabel went to the door, and was told that the physician was down stairs with two gentlemen, and a card was given her, on which she read the name of an English clergyman.

‘There, again!’ said Guy. ‘Everything comes to me. Now it is all quite right.’

Amabel was to go and speak to them, and Guy would see Mr. Morris, the clergyman, as soon as the physician had made his visit. ‘You must not go down,’ he then said to Philip. ‘You will wait in the

sitting-room, won't you? We shall want you again, you know;' and his calm brightness was a contrast to Philip's troubled look. 'All is clear between us now,' he added, as Philip turned away.

Long ago, letters had been written to Venice, begging that if an English clergyman should travel that way, he might be told how earnestly his presence was requested; this was the first who had answered the summons. He was a very young man, much out of health, and travelling under the care of a brother, who was in great dread of his doing anything to injure himself. Amabel soon perceived that, though kind and right-minded, he could not help them, except as far as his office was concerned. He was very shy, only just in priests' orders; he told her he had never had this office to perform before, and seemed almost to expect her to direct him; while his brother was so afraid of his over-exerting himself that she could not hope he would take charge of Philip.

However, after the physician had seen Guy, she brought Mr. Morris to him, and came forward, or remained in her room, according as she was wanted. She thought her husband's face was at each moment acquiring more unearthly beauty, and feeling with him, she was raised above thought or sensation of personal sorrow.

When the first part of the service was over, and she exchanged a few words, out of Guy's hearing, with Mr. Morris, he said to her, as from the very fulness of his heart, 'One longs to humble oneself to him. How it puts one to shame to hear such repentance with such a confession!'

The time came when Philip was wanted. Amabel had called in Anne and the clergyman's brother, and went to fetch her cousin. He was where she had left him in the sitting-room, his face hidden in his arms, crossed on the table, the whole man crushed, bowed down, overwhelmed with remorse.

'We are ready. Come, Philip.'

‘I cannot; I am not worthy,’ he answered, not looking up.

‘Nay, you are surely in no uncharitableness with him now,’ said she, gently.

A shudder expressed his no.

‘And if you are sorry—that is repentance—more fit now than ever—Won’t you come? Would you grieve him now?’

‘You take it on yourself, then,’ said Philip, almost sharply, raising his haggard face.

She did not shrink, and answered, ‘A broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.’

It was a drop of balm, a softening drop. He rose, and trembling from head to foot, from the excess of his agitation, followed her into Guy’s room.

The rite was over, and stillness succeeded the low tones, while all knelt in their places. Amabel arose first, for Guy, though serene, looked greatly exhausted; and as she sprinkled him with vinegar, the others stood up. Guy looked for Philip, and held out his hand. Whether it was his gentle force, or of Philip’s own accord, Amabel could not tell; but as he lay with that look of perfect peace and love, Philip bent down over him, and kissed his forehead.

‘Thank you!’ he faintly whispered. ‘Good night. God bless you and my sister.’

Philip went, and he added, to Amy, ‘Poor fellow! It will be worse for him than for you. You must take care of him.’

She hardly heard the last words, for his head sunk on one side in a deathlike faintness, the room was cleared of all but herself, and Anne fetched the physician at once.

At length it passed off, and Guy slept. The doctor felt his pulse, and she asked his opinion of it. Very low and unequal, she was told; his strength was failing, and there seemed to be no power of rallying it, but they must do their best to support him with cordials, according to the state of his pulse. The physician

could not remain all night himself, but would come as soon as he could, on the following day.

Amabel hardly knew when it was that he went away; the two Mr. Morrisses went to the other hotel; and she made her evening visit to Philip. It was all like a dream, which she could afterwards scarcely remember, till night had come on, and for the first time she found herself allowed to keep watch over her husband.

He had slept quietly for some time, when she roused him to give him some wine, as she was desired to do constantly. He smiled, and said, 'Is no one here but you?'

'No one.'

'My own sweet wife, my Verena, as you have always been. We have been very happy together.'

'Indeed we have,' said she, a look of suffering crossing her face, as she thought of their unclouded happiness.

'It will not be so long before we meet again.'

'A few months perhaps'—said Amabel, in a stifled voice, 'like your mother—'

'No, don't wish that, Amy. You would not wish it to have no mother.'

'You will pray——' She could say no more, but struggled for calmness.

'Yes,' he answered, 'I trust you to it and to mamma for comfort. And Charlie—I shall not rob him any longer. I only borrowed you for a little while,' he added, smiling. 'In a little while we shall meet. Years and months seem alike now. I am sorry to cause you so much grief, my Amy, but it is all as it should be, and we have been very happy.'

Amy listened, her eyes intently fixed on him, unable to repress her agitation, except by silence. After some little time, he spoke again. 'My love to Charlie—and Laura—and Charlotte, my brother and sisters. How kindly they have made me one of them! I need not ask Charlotte to take care of Bustle, and your father

will ride Deloraine. My love to him, and earnest thanks, for you above all, Amy. And dear mamma! I must look now to meeting her in a brighter world; but tell her how I have felt all her kindness since I first came in my strangeness and grief. How kind she was! how she helped me and led me, and made me know what a mother was. Amy, it will not hurt you to hear it was your likeness to her that first taught me to love you. I have been so very happy, I don't understand it.'

He was again silent, as in contemplation, and Amabel's overcoming emotion had been calmed and chastened down again, now that it was no longer herself that was spoken of. Both were still, and he seemed to sleep a little. When next he spoke it was to ask if she could repeat their old favourite lines in *Sintram*. They came to her lips, and she repeated them in a low steady voice.

When death is coming near,
And thy heart shrinks in fear,
And thy limbs fail,
Then raise thy hands and pray
To Him who smooths the way
Through the dark vale.

Seest thou the eastern dawn?
Hear'st thou, in the red morn,
The angel's song?
Oh! lift thy drooping head,
Thou, who in gloom and dread
Hast lain so long.

Death comes to set thee free,
Oh! meet him cheerily,
As thy true friend;
And all thy fears shall cease,
And in eternal peace,
Thy penance end.

'In eternal peace,' repeated Guy; 'I did not think

it would have been so soon. I can't think where the battle has been. I never thought my life could be so bright. It was a foolish longing, when first I was ill, for the cool waves of Redcliffe bay and that shipwreck excitement, if I was to die. This is far better. Read me a psalm, Amy, 'Out of the deep.'

There was something in his perfect happiness that would not let her grieve, though a dull heavy sense of consternation was growing on her. So it went on through the night—not a long, nor a dreary one—but more like a dream. He dozed and woke, said a few tranquil words, and listened to some prayer, psalm, or verse, then slept again, apparently without suffering, except when he tried to take the cordials, and this he did with such increasing difficulty, that she hardly knew how to bear to cause him so much pain, though it was the last lingering hope. He strove to swallow them, each time with the mechanical 'thank you,' so affecting when thus spoken; but at last it came to, 'It is of no use; I cannot.'

Then she knew all hope was gone, and sat still, watching him. The darkness lessened, and twilight came. He slept, but his breath grew short, and unequal: and as she wiped the moisture on his brow, she knew it was the death-damp.

Morning light came on—the church bell rang out matins—the white hills were tipped with rosy light. His pulse was almost gone—his hand was cold. At last he opened his eyes. 'Amy!' he said, as if bewildered, or in pain.

'Here, dearest!'

'I don't see.'

At that moment the sun was rising, and the light streamed in at the open window, and over the bed; but it was 'another dawn than ours' that he beheld, as his most beautiful of all smiles beamed over his face, and he said, 'Glory in the Highest!—peace—good will'—A struggle for breath gave an instant's look of pain; then he whispered so that she could but just

hear—‘The last prayer.’ She read the Commendatory Prayer. She knew not the exact moment, but even as she said ‘Amen,’ she perceived it was over. The soul was with Him with whom dwell the spirits of just men made perfect; and there lay the earthly part with the smile on the face. She closed the dark fringed eyelids—saw him look more beautiful than in sleep,—then, laying her face down on the bed, she knelt on. She took no heed of time, no heed of aught that was earthly. How long she knelt she never knew, but she was roused by Anne’s voice in a frightened sob—‘My lady, my lady—come away! Oh, Miss Amabel, you should not be here.’

She lifted her head, and Anne afterwards told Mary Ross, she should never forget how my lady looked. It was not grief: it was as if she had been a little way with her husband, and was just called back.’

She rose—looked at his face again—saw Arnaud was at hand—let Anne lead her into the next room, and shut the door.

CHAPTER XIV.

The matron who alone has stood,
When not a prop seemed left below,
The first lorn hour of widowhood,
Yet cheered and cheering all the while,
With sad but unaffected smile.

CHRISTIAN YEAR.

THE four months' wife was a widow before she was twenty-one, and there she sat in her loneliness, her maid weeping, seeking in vain for something to say that might comfort her, and struck with fear at seeing her thus composed. It might be said that she had not yet realized her situation, but the truth was, perhaps, that she was in the midst of the true realities. She felt that her Guy was perfectly happy—happy beyond thought or comparison—and she was so accustomed to rejoice with him, that her mind had not yet opened to understand that his joy left her mourning and desolate.

Thus she remained motionless for some minutes, till she was startled by a sound of weeping—those fearful overpowering sobs, so terrible in a strong man forced to give way.

'Philip!' thought she; and withal Guy's words returned—'It will be worse for him than for you. Take care of him.'

'I must go to him,' said she at once.

She took up a purple prayer-book that she had unconsciously brought in her hand from Guy's bed, and walked down stairs, without pausing to think what she should say or do, or remembering how she would naturally have shrunk from the sight of violent grief.

Philip had retired to his own room the night before, overwhelmed by the first full view of the extent of the injuries he had inflicted, the first perception that pride and malevolence had been the true source of his prejudice and misconceptions, and for the first time conscious of the long-fostered conceit that had been his bane from boyhood. All had flashed on him with the discovery of the true purpose of the demand which he thought had justified his persecution. He saw the glory of Guy's character and the part he had acted,—the scales of self-admiration fell from his eyes, and he knew both himself and his cousin.

His sole comfort was in hope for the future, and in devising how his brotherly affection should for the rest of his life testify his altered mind, and atone for past ill-will. This alone kept him from being completely crushed, for he by no means imagined how near the end was; and the physician, willing to spare himself pain, left him in hopes, though knowing how it would be. He slept but little, and was very languid in the morning; but he rose as soon as Arnaud came to him, in order not to occupy Arnaud's time, as well as to be ready in case Guy should send for him again, auguring well from hearing that there was nothing stirring above, hoping this was a sign that Guy was asleep. So hoped the two servants for a long time, but at length, growing alarmed, after many consultations, they resolved to knock at the door, and learn what was the state of things.

Philip likewise was full of anxiety, and coming to his room-door to listen for intelligence, it was the '*e morto*' of the passing Italians that first revealed to him the truth. Guy dead, Amy widowed, himself the cause—he who had said he would never be answerable for the death of this young man!

Truly had Guy's threat, that he would make him repent, been fulfilled. He tottered back to his couch, and sank down, in a burst of anguish that swept away

all the self-control that had once been his pride. There Amabel found him stretched, face downwards, quivering and convulsed by frightful sobs.

‘Don’t—don’t, Philip,’ said she, in her gentle voice. ‘Don’t cry so terribly!’

Without looking up, he made a gesture with his hand as if to drive her away. ‘Don’t come here to reproach me!’ he muttered.

‘No, no; don’t speak so. I want you to hear me; I have something for you from him. If you would only listen, I want to tell you how happy and comfortable it was.’ She took a chair and sat down by him, relieved on perceiving that the sobs grew a little less violent.

‘It was very peaceful, very happy,’ repeated she. ‘We ought to be very glad.’

He turned round, and glanced at her for a moment; but he could not bear to see her quiet face. ‘You don’t know what you say,’ he gasped. ‘No; take care of yourself, don’t trouble yourself for such as me!’

‘I must; he desired me,’ said Amabel. ‘You will be happier, indeed, Philip, if you would only think what glory it is, and that he is all safe, and has won the victory, and will have no more of those hard, hard struggles and bitter repentance. It has been such a night, that it seems wrong to be sorry.’

‘Did you say he spoke of me again?’

‘Yes; here is his Prayer-book. Your father gave it to him, and he meant to have told you about it himself, only he could not talk yesterday evening, and could not part with it till——’

Amy broke off by opening the worn purple cover, and showing the name, in the archdeacon’s writing: ‘He’s very fond of it,’ she said; ‘it is the one he always uses.’ (Alas! she had not learnt to speak of him in the past tense.)

Philip held out his hand, but the agony of grief returned the next moment. ‘My father, my father! He would have done him justice. If he had lived this would never have been!’

‘That is over; you do him justice now,’ said Amy. ‘You did, indeed you did, make him quite happy. He said so, again and again. I never saw him so happy as when you began to get better. I don’t think any one ever had so much happiness; and it never ceased, it was all quiet, and peace and joy, till it brightened quite into perfect day—and the angel’s song! Don’t you remember yesterday, how clear and sweet his voice came out in that, and it was the last thing almost he said. I believe’—she lowered her voice—‘I believe he finished it among them.’

The earnest placid voice, speaking thus, in calmness and simplicity, could not fail in soothing him; but he was so shaken and exhausted that she had great difficulty in restoring him. After a time, he lay perfectly still on the sofa, and she was sitting by, relieved by the tranquillity, when there was a knock at the door, and Arnaud came in, and stood hesitating, as if he hardly knew how to begin. The present fear of agitating her charge helped her now, when obliged to turn her thoughts to the subject on which she knew Arnaud was come. She went to the door, and spoke low, hoping her cousin might not hear or understand.

‘How soon must it be?’

‘My lady, to-morrow,’ said Arnaud, looking down. ‘They say that so it must be; and the priest consents to have it in the churchyard here. The brother of the clergyman is here, and would know if your ladyship would wish——’

‘I will speak to him,’ said Amabel, reluctant to send such messages through servants.

‘Let me,’ said Philip, who understood what was going on, and was of course impelled to spare her as much as possible.

‘Thank you,’ said she, ‘if you are able!’

‘Oh, yes; I’ll go at once!’

‘Stop,’ said she, as he was setting forth; ‘you don’t know what you are going to say.’

He put his hand to his head in confusion.

‘He wished to be buried here,’ said Amabel, ‘and——’

But this renewal of the assurance of the death was too much; and covering his face with his hands, he sank back in another paroxysm of violent sobs. Amabel could not leave him.

‘Ask Mr. Morris to be so good as to wait, and I will come directly,’ said she, then returned to her task of comfort, till she again saw Philip lying, with suspended faculties, in the repose of complete exhaustion.

She then went to Mr. Morris, with a look and tone of composure that almost startled him, thanking him for his assistance in the arrangements. The funeral was to be at sunrise the next day, before the villagers began to keep the feast of St. Michael, and the rest was to be settled by Arnaud and Mr. Morris. He then said somewhat reluctantly that his brother had desired to know whether Lady Morville wished to see him to-day, and begged to be sent for; but Amy plainly perceived that he thought it very undesirable for his brother to have any duties to perform to-day. She questioned herself whether she might not ask him to read to her, and whether it might be better for Philip; but she thought she ought not to ask what might injure him merely for her own comfort; and, besides, Philip was entirely incapable of self-command, and it would not be acting fairly to expose him to the chance of discovering to a stranger, feelings that he would ordinarily guard so scrupulously.

She therefore gratefully refused the offer, and Mr. Morris very nearly thanked her for doing so. He took his leave, and she knew she must return to her post, but first she indulged herself with one brief visit to the room where all her cares and duties had lately centred. A look, a thought, a prayer—The beauteous expression there fixed was a help, as it had ever been in life, and she went back again cheered and sustained.

Throughout that day she attended on her cousin, whose bodily indisposition required as much care as his

mind needed soothing. She talked to him, read to him, tried to set him the example of taking food, took thought for him as if he was the chief sufferer, as if it was the natural thing for her to do, working in the strength her husband had left her, and for him who had been his chief object of care. She had no time to herself, except the few moments that she allowed herself now and then to spend in gazing at the dear face that was still her comfort and joy; until, at last, late in the evening, she succeeded in reading Philip to sleep. Then, as she sat in the dim candlelight, with everything in silence, a sense of desolation came upon her, and she knew that she was alone.

At that moment a carriage thundered at the door, and she remembered for the first time that she was expecting her father and mother. She softly left the room, and closed the door; and finding Anne in the next room, sent her down.

‘Meet mamma, Anne,’ said she; ‘tell her I am quite well. Bring them here.’

They entered, and there stood Amabel, her face a little flushed, just like, only calmer, the daughter they had parted with on her bridal day, four months ago. She held up her hand as a sign of silence, and said, ‘Hush! don’t wake Philip.’

Mr. Edmonstone was almost angry, and actually began an impatient exclamation, but broke it off with a sob, caught her in his arms, kissed her, and then buried his face in his handkerchief. Mrs. Edmonstone, still aghast at the tidings they had met at Vicenza, and alarmed at her unnatural composure, embraced her; held her for some moments, then looked anxiously to see her weep. But there was not a tear, and her voice was itself, though low and weak, as, while her father began pacing up and down, she repeated, ‘Pray don’t, papa; Philip has been so ill all day.’

‘Philip—pshaw!’ said Mr. Edmonstone, hastily: ‘How are you, yourself, my poor darling?’

‘Quite well, thank you,’ said Amy. ‘There is a room ready for you.’

Mrs. Edmonstone was extremely alarmed, sure that this was grief too deep for outward tokens, and had no peace till she had made Amabel consent to come up with her, and go at once to bed. To this she agreed, after she had rung for Arnaud, and stood with him in the corridor, to desire him to go at once to Captain Morville, as softly as he could, and when he waked, to say Mr. and Mrs. Edmonstone were come, but she thought he had better not see them to-night; to tell him from her that she wished him good night, and hoped he would sleep quietly. ‘And Arnaud, take care you do not let him know the hour to-morrow. Perhaps, as he is so tired, he may sleep till afterwards.’

Mrs. Edmonstone was very impatient of this colloquy, and glad when Amabel ended it, and led the way up stairs. She entered her little room, then quietly opened another door, and Mrs. Edmonstone found herself standing by the bed, where that which was mortal lay, with its face bright with the impress of immortality.

The shock was great, for he was indeed as a son to her, but her fears for Amabel would not leave room for any other thought.

‘Is not he beautiful?’ said Amy, with a smile like his own.

‘My dear, my dear, you ought not to be here,’ said Mrs. Edmonstone, trying to lead her away.

‘If you would let me say my prayers here!’ said she, submissively.

‘I think not. I don’t know how to refuse, if it would be a comfort,’ said Mrs. Edmonstone, much distressed; ‘but I can’t think it right. The danger is greater after—And surely, my poor dear child, you have a reason for not risking yourself.’

‘Go, mamma, I ought not to have brought you here; I forgot about infection,’ said Amabel, with the

tranquillity which her mother had hoped to shake by her allusion. 'I am coming.'

She took up Guy's watch and a book from the table by the bedside, and came back to her sleeping-room. She wound up the watch, and then allowed her mother to undress her, answering all her inquiries about her health, in a gentle indifferent matter-of-fact way. She said little of Guy, but that little was without agitation, and in due time she lay down in bed. Still, whenever Mrs. Edmonstone looked at her there was no sleep in her eyes, and at last she persuaded her to leave her, on the plea that being watched made her more wakeful, as she did not like to see mamma sitting up.

Almost as soon as it was light Mrs. Edmonstone returned, and was positively frightened; for there stood Amabel, dressed in her white muslin, her white bonnet, and her deep lace wedding-veil. All her glossy hair was hidden away, and her face was placid as ever, though there was a red spot on each cheek. She saw her mother's alarm, and reassured her by speaking calmly. 'You know I have nothing else but colours; I should like to wear this, if you will let me.'

'But dearest, you must not—cannot go.'

'It is very near. We often walked there together. I would not if I thought it would hurt me, but I wish it very much indeed. At home by Michaelmas!'

Mrs. Edmonstone yielded, though her mind misgave her, comforted by hoping for the much-desired tears—But Amabel, who used to cry so easily for a trifle, had now not a tear. Her grief was as yet too deep, or perhaps more truly sorrow and mourning had not begun while the influence of her husband's spirit was about her still.

It was time to set forth, and the small party of mourners met in the long corridor. Mr. Edmonstone would have given his daughter his arm, but she said,

'I beg your pardon, dear papa, I don't think I can ;' and she walked alone and firmly.

It was a strange sight that English funeral, so far from England. The bearers were Italian peasants. There was a sheet thrown over the coffin instead of a pall, and this, with the white dress of the young widow, gave the effect of the emblematic whiteness of a child's funeral ; and the impression was heightened by the floating curling white clouds of vapours rising in strange shrouded shadowy forms, like spirit mourners, from the narrow ravines round the graveyard, and the snowy mountains shining in the morning light against the sky.

Gliding almost like one of those white wreaths of mist, Amabel walked alone, tearless and calm, her head bent down, and her long veil falling round her in full light folds, as when it had caught the purple light on her wedding-day. Her parents were close behind, weeping more for the living than the dead, though Guy had a fast hold of their hearts ; and his own mother could scarce have loved him better than Mrs. Edmonstone did. Lastly, were Anne and Arnaud sincere mourners, especially Arnaud, who had loved and cherished his young master from childhood.

They went to the stranger's corner of the graveyard, for of course the church did not open to a member of another communion of the visible church ; but around them were the hills in which he had read many a meaning, and which had echoed a response to his last chant with the promise of the blessing of peace.

The blessing of peace came in the precious English burial-service, as they laid him to rest in the earth, beneath the spreading chesnut-tree, rendered a home by those words of his Mother Church—the mother who had guided each of his steps in his orphaned life. It was a distant grave, far from his home and kindred, but in a hallowed spot, and a most fair one ; and

there might his mortal frame meetly rest till the day when he should rise, while from their ancestral tombs should likewise awaken the forefathers whose sins were indeed visited on him in his early death ; but, thanks to Him who giveth the victory, in death without the sting.

Amabel, in obedience to a sign from her mother, sat on a root of the tree, while the Lesson was read, and afterwards she moved forward and stood at the edge of the grave, her hands tightly clasped, and her head somewhat raised, as if her spirit was following her husband to his repose above, rather than to his earthly resting-place.

The service was ended, and she was taking a last long gaze, while her mother, in the utmost anxiety, was striving to make up her mind to draw her away, when suddenly a tall gaunt figure was among them—his face ghastly pale and full of despair and bewilderment—his step uncertain—his dress disordered.

Amabel turned, went up to him, laid her hand on his arm, and said, softly and quietly looking up in his face, ‘It is over now, Philip ; you had better come home.’

Not attempting to withstand her, he obeyed as if it was his only instinct. It was like some vision of a guiding, succouring spirit, as she moved on, slowly gliding in her white draperies. Mrs. Edmonstone watched her in unspeakable awe and amazement, almost overpowering her anxieties. It seemed as impossible that the one should be Amy as that the other should be Philip ; her gentle little clinging daughter, or her proud, imperturbable, self-reliant nephew.

But it was Amy’s own face, when they entered the corridor and she turned back her veil, showing her flushed and heated cheeks, at the same time opening Philip’s door and saying, ‘Now you must rest, for you ought not to have come out. Lie down, and let mamma read to you.’

Mrs. Edmonstone was reluctant, but Amy looked

up earnestly and said, 'Yes, dear mamma, I should like to be alone a little while.'

She then conducted her father to the sitting-room up stairs.

'I will give you the papers,' she said; and leaving him, returned immediately.

'This is his will,' she said. 'You will tell me if there is anything I must do at once. Here is a letter to Mr. Markham, and another to Mr. Dixon, if you will be so kind as to write and enclose them. Thank you, dear papa.'

She drew a blotting-book towards him, saw that there was ink and pen, and left him too much appalled at her ways to say anything.

His task was less hard than the one she had set her mother. Strong excitement had carried Philip to the grave-yard as soon as he learnt what was passing. He could hardly return even with Arnaud's support, and he had only just reached his sofa before he fell into a fainting-fit.

It was long before he gave any sign of returning life, and when he opened his eye and saw Mrs. Edmonstone, he closed them almost immediately, as if unable to meet her look. It was easier to treat him in his swoon than afterwards. She knew nothing of his repentance and confession; she only knew he had abused her confidence, led Laura to act insincerely, and been the cause of Guy's death. She did not know how bitterly he accused himself, and though she could not but see he was miserable, she could by no means fathom his wretchedness, nor guess that her very presence made him conscious how far he was fallen. He was so ill that she could not manifest her displeasure, nor show anything but solicitude for his relief; but her kindness was entirely to his condition, not to himself; and perceiving this, while he thought his confession had been received, greatly aggravated his distress, though he owned within himself that he well deserved it.

She found that he was in no state for being read to ;

he was completely exhausted, and suffering from violent headache. So when she could conscientiously say that to be left quiet was the best thing for him, she went to her daughter.

Amabel was lying on her bed, her Bible open by her; not exactly reading, but as if she was now and then finding a verse and dwelling on it. Gentle and serene she looked; but would she never weep? would those quiet blue eyes be always sleepless and tearless?

She asked anxiously for Philip, and throughout the day he seemed to be her care. She did not try to get up and go to him, but she was continually begging her mother to see about him. It was a harassing day for poor Mrs. Edmonstone. She would have been glad to have sat by Amabel all the time, writing to Charles, or hearing her talk. Amy had much to say, for she wished to make her mother share the perfect peace and thankfulness that had been breathed upon her during those last hours with her husband, and she liked to tell the circumstances of his illness and his precious sayings, to one who would treasure them almost like herself. She spoke with her face turned away, so as not to see her mother's tears, but her mild voice unwavering, as if secure in the happiness of these recollections. This was the only comfort of Mrs. Edmonstone's day; but when she heard her husband's boots creaking in the corridor, it was a sure sign that he was in some perplexity, and that she must go and help him to write a letter, or make some arrangement. Philip, too, needed attention; but excellent nurse as Mrs. Edmonstone was, she only made him worse. The more he felt she was his kind aunt still, the more he saw how he had wounded her, and that her pardon was an effort. The fond, spontaneous, unreserved affection—almost petting—which he had wellnigh dared to contemn, was gone; her manner was only that of a considerate nurse. Much as he longed for a word of Laura, he did not dare to lead to it,—indeed, he was so far from speaking to her of any subject which touched him, that

he did not presume even to inquire for Amabel, he only heard of her through Arnaud.

At night sheer exhaustion worked its own cure; he slept soundly, and awoke in the morning revived. He heard from Arnaud that Lady Morville was pretty well, but had not slept; and presently Mrs. Edmonstone came in and took pains to make him comfortable, but with an involuntary dryness of manner. She told him his uncle would come to see him as soon as he was up, if he felt equal to talking over some business. Philip's brain reeled with dismay and consternation, for it flashed on him that he was heir of Redclyffe. He must profit by the death he had caused; he had slain, and he must take possession of the lands which, with loathing and horror, he remembered that he had almost coveted. Nothing more was wanting. There was little consolation in remembering that the inheritance would clear away all difficulties in the way of his marriage. He had sinned; wealth did not alter his fault, and his spirit could not brook that, if spurned in poverty, he should be received for his riches. He honoured his aunt for being cold and reserved, and could not bear the idea of seeing his uncle ready to meet him half-way.

After the first shock he became anxious to have the meeting over, know the worst, and hear on what ground he stood with Laura. As soon as he was dressed, he sent a message to announce that he was ready, and lay on the sofa, awaiting his uncle's arrival, as patiently as he could. Mr. Edmonstone, meantime, was screwing up his courage,—not that he meant to say a word of Laura,—Philip was too unwell to be told his opinion of him, but now he had ceased to rely on his nephew, he began to dread him and his overbearing ways; and, besides, he had a perfect horror of witnessing agitation.

At last he came, and Philip rose to meet him with a feeling of shame and inferiority most new to him.

'Don't, don't, I beg,' said Mr. Edmonstone, with

what was meant for dignity. 'Lie still; you had much better. My stars! how ill you look!' he exclaimed, startled by Philip's altered face and figure. 'You have had a sharpish touch; but you are better, eh?'

'Yes, thank you.'

'Well; I thought I had better come and speak to you, if you felt up to it. Here is—here is,—I hope it is all right and legal; but that you can tell better than I; and you are concerned in it, any how. Here is poor Guy's will, which we thought you had better look over, if you liked, and felt equal—eh?'

'Thank you,' said Philip, holding out his hand; but Mr. Edmonstone withheld it, trying his patience by an endless quantity of discursive half-sentences, apparently without connexion with each other, about disappointment, and hopes, and being sorry, and prospects, and its 'being an unpleasant thing,' and 'best not raise his expectations;' during all which time Philip, expecting to hear of Laura, and his heart beating so fast as to renew the sensation of faintness, waited in vain, and strove to gather the meaning, and find out whether he was forgiven, almost doubting whether the confusion was in his own mind or in his uncle's words. However, at last the meaning bolted out in one comprehensive sentence, when Mr. Edmonstone thought he had sufficiently prepared him for his disappointment,—'Poor Amy is to be confined in the spring.'

There Mr. Edmonstone stopped short, very much afraid of the effect; but Philip raised himself, his face brightened, as if he was greatly relieved, and from his heart he exclaimed, 'Thank Heaven!'

'That's right! that is very well said!' answered Mr. Edmonstone, very much pleased. 'It would be a pity it should go out of the old line after all; and it's a very generous thing in you to say so.'

'Oh no!' said Philip, shrinking into himself at even such praise as this.

'Well, well,' said his uncle, 'you will see he has thought of you, be it how it may. There! I only hope

it is right; though it does seem rather queer, appointing poor little Amy executor rather than me. If I had but been here in time. But 'twas Heaven's will; and so— It does not signify, after all, if it is not quite formal. We understand each other.'

The will was on a sheet of letter-paper, in Arnaud's stiff French handwriting; it was witnessed by the two Mr. Morris, and signed on the 27th of September, in very frail and feeble characters. Amabel and Markham were the executors, and Amabel was to be sole guardian, in case of the birth of a child. If it was a son, £10,000 was left to Philip himself; if not, he was to have all the plate, furniture, &c., of Redclyffe, with the exception of whatever Lady Morville might choose for herself.

Philip scarcely regarded the legacy (though it smoothed away his chief difficulties) as more than another of those ill-requited benefits which were weighing him to the earth. He read on to a sentence which reproached him so acutely, that he would willingly have hidden from it, as he had done from Guy's countenance. It was the bequest of £5000 to Elizabeth Wellwood. Sebastian Dixon's debts were to be paid off; £1000 was left to Marianne Dixon, and the rest of the personal property was to be Amabel's.

He gave back the paper, with only the words 'thank you.' He did not feel as if it was for him to speak; and Mr. Edmonstone hesitated, made an attempt at congratulating him, broke down, and asked if it was properly drawn up.

He glanced at the beginning and end, said it was quite correct, and laid his head down, as if the examination had been a great deal of trouble.

'And what do you think of Amy's being under age?' fidgeted on Mr. Edmonstone. 'How is she to act, poor dear? Shall I act for her?'

'She will soon be of age,' said Philip, wearily.

'In January, poor darling. Who would have thought how it would have been with her? I little thought, last

May— But holloa! what have I been at?' cried he, jumping up in a great fright, as Philip, so weak as to be overcome by the least agitation, changed countenance, covered his face with his hands, and turned away with a suppressed sob. 'I didn't mean it, I am sure! Here! Mamma!'

'No, no,' said Philip, recovering, and sitting up; 'don't call her, I beg. There is nothing the matter.'

Mr. Edmonstone obeyed; but he was too much afraid of causing a renewal of agitation to continue the conversation; and, after walking about the room a little while, and shaking it more than Philip could well bear, he went away to write his letters.

In the meantime, Amabel had been spending her morning in the same quiet way as the former day. She wrote part of a letter to Laura, and walked to the graveyard, rather against her mother's wish; but she was so good and obedient, it was impossible to thwart her, though Mrs. Edmonstone was surprised at her proposal to join her father and Philip at tea. 'Do you like it, my dear?'

'He told me to take care of him,' said Amabel.

'I cannot feel that he deserves you should worry yourself about him,' said Mrs. Edmonstone. 'If you knew all——'

'I do know all, mamma,—if you mean about Laura. Surely you must forgive. Think how he repents. What, have you not had his letter? Then how did you know?'

'I learned it from Laura herself. Her trouble at his illness revealed it. Do you say he has written?'

'Yes, mamma; he told Guy all about it, and was very sorry and wrote as soon as he was able. Guy sent you a long message. He was so anxious about it.'

Amabel showed more eagerness to understand the state of the case, than she had about anything else. She urged that Philip should be spoken to, as soon as possible, saying the suspense must be grievous, and dwelling on his repentance. Mrs. Edmonstone promised

to speak to papa, and this satisfied her; but she held her resolution of meeting Philip that evening, looking on him as a charge left her by her husband, and conscious that, as she alone understood how deep was his sorrow, she could make the time spent with her parents less embarrassing.

Her presence always soothed him, and regard for her kept her father quiet; so that the evening passed off very well. Mrs. Edmonstone waited on both; and, in Amy's presence, was better able to resume her usual manner towards her nephew, and he sat wondering at the placidity of Amy's pale face. Her hair was smoothed back, and she wore a cap,—the loss of her long shady curls helping to mark the change from the bright days of her girlhood; but the mournfulness of her countenance did not mar the purity and serenity that had always been its great characteristic; and in the faint sweet smile with which she received a kind word or attention, there was a likeness to that peculiar and beautiful expression of her husband's, so as, in spite of the great difference of feature and colouring, to give her a resemblance to him.

All this day had been spent by Mr. Edmonstone in a fret to get away from Recoara, and his wife was hardly less desirous to leave it than himself, for she could have no peace or comfort about Amabel, till she had her safely at home. Still she dreaded proposing the departure, and even more the departure itself; and, in spite of Mr. Edmonstone's impatience, she let her alone till she had her mourning; but when, after two days of hard work, Anne had nearly managed to complete it, she made up her mind to tell her daughter that they ought to set out.

Amabel replied by mentioning Philip. She deemed him a sort of trust, and had been reposing in the thought of making him a reason for lingering in the scene where the brightness of her life had departed from her. Mrs. Edmonstone would not allow that she ought to remain for his sake, and told her it was her duty to

resolve to leave the place. She said, 'Yes, but for him;' and it ended in Mrs. Edmonstone going, without telling her, to inform him that she thought Amy ought to be at home as soon as possible; but that it was difficult to prevail on her, because she thought him as yet not well enough to be left. He was, of course, shocked at being thus considered, and as soon as he next saw Amabel, told her, with great earnestness, that he could not bear to see her remaining there on his account; that he was almost well, and meant to leave Recoara very soon; the journey was very easy; the sea voyage would be the best thing for him, and he should be glad to get to the regimental doctor at Corfu.

Amabel sighed, and knew she ought to be convinced. The very pain it gave her to lose sight of that green grave, the chesnut-tree, and the white mountain; to leave the rooms and passages which still, to her ears, were haunted by Guy's hushed step and voice, and to part with the window where she used each wakeful night to retrace his profile as he had stood pausing before telling her of his exceeding happiness; that very pain made her think that opposition would be selfish. She must go some time or other, and it was foolish to defer the struggle; she must not detain her parents in an infected place, nor keep her mother from Charles. She therefore consented, and let them do what they pleased,—only insisting on Arnaud's being left with Philip.

Philip did not think this necessary, but yielded, when she urged it as a relief to her own mind; and Arnaud, though unwilling, and used to his own way, could make no objection when she asked it as a personal favour. Arnaud was, at his own earnest wish, to continue in her service; and, as soon as Philip was able to embark, was to follow her to Hollywell.

All this time nothing passed about Laura. Amabel asked several times whether papa had spoken, but was always answered, 'Not yet;' and at last Mrs. Edmonstone, after vainly trying to persuade him, was obliged to give

it up. The truth was, he could not begin; he was afraid of his nephew, and so unused to assume superiority over him that he did not know what to do, and found all kinds of reasons for avoiding the embarrassing scene. Since Philip still must be dealt with cautiously, better not enter on the subject at all. When reminded that the suspense was worse than anything, he said, no one could tell how things would turn out, and grew angry with his wife for wishing him to make up a shameful affair like that, when poor Guy had not been dead a week, and he had been the death of him; but it was just like mamma, she always spoilt him. He had a great mind to vow never to consent to his daughter's marrying such an overbearing, pragmatistical fellow; she ought to be ashamed of even thinking of him, when he was no better than her brother's murderer.

After this tirade, Mrs. Edmonstone might well feel obliged to tell Amabel, that papa must not be pressed any further; and, of course, if he would not speak, she could not (nor did she wish it).

'Then, mamma,' said Amabel, with the air of decision that had lately grown on her, 'I must tell him. I beg your pardon,' she added, imploringly; 'but indeed I must. It is hard on him not to hear that you had not his letter, and that Laura has told. I know Guy would wish me, so don't be displeased, dear mamma.'

'I can't be displeased with anything you do.'

'And you give me leave?'

'To be sure I do,—leave to do anything but hurt yourself.'

'And would it be wrong for me to offer to write to him? No one else will, and it will be sad for him not to hear. It cannot be wrong, can it?' said she, as the fingers of her right hand squeezed her wedding-ring, a habit she had taken up of late.

'Certainly not, my poor darling. Do just as you think fit. I am sorry for him, for I am sure he is in great trouble, and I should like him to be comforted—'

if he can. But, Amy, you must not ask me to do it. He has disappointed me too much.'

Mrs. Edmonstone left the room in tears.

Amabel went to the window, looked long at the chesnut-tree, then up into the sky, sat down, and leant her forehead on her hand in meditation, until she rose up, cheered and sustained, as if she had been holding council with her husband.

She did not over-estimate Philip's sufferings from suspense and anxiety. He had not heard a word of Laura; how she had borne his illness, nor how much displeasure his confession had brought upon her; nor could he learn what hope there was that his repentance was accepted. He did not venture to ask, for after engaging to leave all to them, could he intrude his own concerns on them at such a time? It was but a twelvemonth since he had saddened and shadowed Guy's short life and love with the very suffering from uncertainty that he found so hard to bear. As he remembered this, he had a sort of fierce satisfaction in enduring this retributive justice; though there were moods when he felt the torture so acutely, that it seemed to him as if his brain would turn if he saw them depart, and was left behind to this distracting doubt.

The day had come on which they were to take their first stage, as far as Vicenza, and his last hopes were fading. He tried to lose the sense of misery by bestirring himself in the preparations; but he was too weak, and Mrs. Edmonstone, insisting on his attempting no more, sent him back to his own sitting-room.

Presently there was a knock, and in came Amabel, dressed, for the first time, in her weeds, the blackness and width of her sweeping crape making her young face look smaller and paler, while she held in her hand some leaves of chesnut, that showed where she had been. She smiled a little as she came in, saying, 'I am come to you for a little quiet, out of the bustle of the packing up. I want you to do something for me.'

‘Anything for you.’

‘It is what you will like to do,’ said she, with *that* smile, ‘for it is more for *him* than for me. Could you, without teasing yourself, put that into Latin for me, by and by? I think it should be in Latin, as it is in a foreign country.’

She gave him a paper in her own writing.

GUY MORVILLE,

OF REDCLYFFE, ENGLAND.

DIED THE EVE OF ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS, 18—,

AGED 21½.

I BELIEVE IN THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

‘Will you be so kind as to give it to Arnaud when it is done?’ she continued; ‘he will send it to the man who is making the cross. I think the kind people here will respect it.’

‘Yes,’ said Philip, ‘it is soon done, and thank you for letting me do it. But, Amy, I would not alter your choice, yet there is one that seems to me more applicable, ‘Greater love hath no man—’

‘I know what you mean,’ said Amy; ‘but that has so high a meaning that he could not bear it to be applied to him.’

‘Or rather, what right have I to quote it?’ said Philip, bitterly. ‘His friend! No, Amy; you should rather choose, ‘If thine enemy thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.’ I am sure they are burning on mine,’ and he pressed his hand on his forehead.

‘Don’t say such things. We both know that, at the worst of times, he looked on you as a sincere friend.’ Philip groaned, and she thought it best to go on to something else. ‘I like this best,’ she said. ‘It will be nice to think of far away. I should like, too, for these

Italians to see the stranger has the same creed as themselves.'

After a moment's pause, during which he looked at the paper, he said, 'Amy, I have one thing to ask of you. Will you write my name in the Prayer-book?'

'That I will,' said she, and Philip drew it from under the sofa cushion, and began putting together his pocket gold pen. While he was doing this, she said, 'Will you write to me sometimes? I shall be so anxious to know how you get on.'

'Yes, thank you,' said he, with a sigh, as if he would fain have said more.

She paused, then said abruptly, 'Do you know they never had your letter?'

'Ha? Good heavens!' cried he, starting up in consternation; 'then they don't know it!'

'They do. Sit down, Philip, and hear. I wanted to tell you about it. They know it. Poor Laura was so unhappy when you were ill, that mamma made it out from her.'

He obeyed the hand that invited him back to his seat, and turned his face earnestly towards her. He must let her be his comforter, though a moment before his mind would have revolted at troubling the newly-made widow with his love affairs. Amabel told him, as fully and clearly as she could, how the truth had come out, how gently Laura had been dealt with, how Charles had been trying to soften his father, and papa had not said one angry word to her.

'They forgive her. Oh, Amy, thanks indeed! You have taken away one of the heaviest burdens. I am glad, indeed, that she spoke first. For my own part, I see through all their kindness and consideration, how they regard me.'

'They know how sorry you are, and that you wrote to tell all,' said Amabel. 'They forgive, indeed they do; but they cannot bear to speak about it just yet.'

'If you forgive, Amy,' said he, in a husky voice, 'I may hope for pardon from any.'

‘Hush! don’t say that. You have been so kind, all this time, and we have felt together so much, that no one could help forgetting anything that went before. Then you will write to me; and will you tell me how to direct to you?’

‘You will write to me?’ cried Philip, brightening for a moment with glad surprise. ‘Oh, Amy, you will quite overpower me with your goodness!—The coals of fire,’ he finished, sinking his voice, and again pressing his hand to his brow.

‘You must not speak so, Philip;’ then, looking at him, ‘Is your head aching?’

‘Not so much aching as—’ he paused, and exclaimed, as if carried away in spite of himself, ‘almost bursting with the thoughts of—of you, Amy,—of him whom I knew too late,—wilfully misunderstood, envied, persecuted; who,—oh! Amy, Amy, if you could guess at the anguish of but one of my thoughts, you would know what the first murderer meant when he said, ‘My punishment is greater than I can bear.’

‘I can’t say don’t think,’ said Amy, in her sweet calm tone; ‘for I have seen how happy repentance made him, but I know it must be dreadful. I suppose the worse it is, at the time, the better it must be afterwards. And I am sure this Prayer-book’—she had her hand on it all the time, as if it was a pleasure to her to touch it again—‘must be a comfort to you. Did you not see that he made me give it to you to use that day, when if ever there was pardon and peace—’

‘I remember,’ said Philip, in a low, grave, heartfelt tone; and as she took the pen, and was writing his name below the old inscription, he added, ‘And the date, Amy, and—yes, as he saw her write ‘from G. M.—but put from A. F. M. too. Thank you! One thing more,’ he hesitated, and spoke very low, ‘You *must* write in it what you said when you came to fetch me that day,—‘A broken’—

As she finished writing, Mrs. Edmonstone came in. ‘My Amy, all is ready. We must go. Good by,

Philip,' said she, in the tone of one so eager for departure as to fancy farewells would hasten it. However, she was not more eager than Mr. Edmonstone, who rushed in to hurry them off, shaking hands cordially with Philip, and telling him to make haste and recover his good looks. Amabel held out her hand. She would fain have said something cheering, but the power failed her. A deep colour came into her cheeks ; she drew her thick black veil over her face, and turned away.

Philip came down stairs with them, saw her enter the carriage, followed by her mother, Mr. Edmonstone outside. He remembered the gay smile with which he last saw her seated in that carriage, and the active figure that had sprung after her ; he thought of the kind bright eyes that had pleaded with him for the last time, and recollected the suspicions and the pride with which he had plumed himself on his rejection, and thrown away the last chance.

Should he ever see Amabel again ? He groaned and went back to the deserted rooms.

CHAPTER XV.

And see
If aught of sprightly fresh or free,
With the calm sweetness may compare
Of the pale form half slumbering there.
Therefore this one dear couch about
We linger hour by hour :
The love that each to each we bear,
All treasures of endearing care,
Into her lap we pour.

LYRA INNOCENTIIUM.

THE brother and sisters, left at home together, had been a very sad and silent party, unable to attempt comforting each other. Charlotte's grief was wild and ungovernable; breaking out into fits of sobbing, and attending to nothing till she was abashed first by a reproof from Mr. Ross, and next by the description of Amabel's conduct; when she grew ashamed, and set herself to atone, by double care, for her neglect of Charles's comforts.

Charles, however, wanted her little. He had rather be let alone. After one exclamation of, 'My poor Amy !' he said not a word of lamentation, but lay hour after hour without speaking, dwelling on the happy days he had spent with Guy,—companion, friend, brother,—the first beam that had brightened his existence, and taught him to make it no longer cheerless; musing on the brilliant promise that had been cut off, remembering his hopes for his most beloved sister, and feeding his sorrow with imagining hers. It was his first grief, and a very deep one. He seemed to have

no comfort but in Mr. Ross, who contrived to come to him every day, and would tell him how fully he shared his affection and admiration for Guy, how he had marvelled at his whole character, as it had shown itself more especially at the time of his marriage, when his chastened temper had been the more remarkable in so young a man, with the world opening on him so brightly. As to the promise lost, that indeed, Mr. Ross owned, and pleased Charles by saying how he had hoped to watch its fulfilment; but he spoke of its having been, in truth, no blight, only that those fair blossoms were removed where nothing could check their full development or mar their beauty. 'The hope in earthly furrows sown would ripen in the sky;' Charles groaned, saying it was hard not to see it, and they might speak as they would, but that would not comfort him in thinking of his sister. What was his sorrow to hers? But Mr. Ross had strong trust in Amabel's depth and calm resignation. He said her spirit of yielding would support her, that as in drowning or falling, struggling is fatal when quietness saves, so it would be with her; and that even in this greatest of all trials she would rise instead of being crushed, with all that was good and beautiful in her purified and refined. Charles heard, strove to believe and be consoled, and brought out his letters, trying, with voice breaking down, to show Mr. Ross how truly he had judged of Amy, then listened with a kind of pleasure to the reports of the homely but touching laments of all the village.

Laura did not, like her brother and sister, seek for consolation from Mr. Ross or Mary. She went on her own way, saying little, fulfilling her household cares, writing all the letters that nobody else would write, providing for Charles's ease, and looking thoroughly cast down and wretched, but saying nothing; conscious that her brother and sister did not believe her affection for Guy equal to theirs; and Charles was too much dejected, and too much displeased with Philip, to try to console her.

It was a relief to hear, at length, that the travellers had landed, and would be at home in the evening, not till late, wrote Mrs. Edmonstone, because she thought it best for Amabel to go at once to her room, her own old room, for she particularly wished not to be moved from it.

The evening had long closed in; poor Bustle had been shut up in Charlotte's room, and the three sat together round the fire, unable to guess how they should meet her, and thinking how they had lately been looking forward to greeting their bride, as they used proudly to call her. Charles dwelt on that talk on the green, and his 'when shall we three meet again?' and spoke not a word; Laura tried to read; and Charlotte heard false alarms of wheels; but all were so still, that when the wheels really came, they were heard all down the turnpike road, and along the lane, before they sounded on the gravel drive.

Laura and Charlotte ran into the hall, Charles reached his crutches, but his hands shook so much that he could not adjust them, and was obliged to sit down, rising the next minute as the black figures entered together. Amy's sweet face was pressed to his, but neither spoke. That agitated 'My dear, dear Charlie!' was his mother's, as she threw her arms round him, with redoubled kisses and streaming tears; and there was a trembling tone in his father's 'Well, Charlie boy, how have you got on without us?'

They sat down, Charles with his sister beside him, and holding a hand steadier than his own, but hot and feverish to the touch. He leant forward to look at her face, and, as if in answer, she turned it on him. It was the old face, paler and thinner, and the eyelids had a hard reddened look from want of sleep; but Charles, like his mother at first, was almost awed by the melancholy serenity of the expression. 'Have you been quite well?' she asked, in a voice which sounded strangely familiar, in its fond low tones.

'Yes, quite.'

There was a pause, followed by an interchange of question and answer between the others, on the journey, and on various little home circumstances. Presently Mrs. Edmonstone said Amy had better come up stairs.

‘I have not seen Bustle,’ said Amy, looking at Charlotte.

‘He is in my room,’ faltered Charlotte.

‘I should like to see him.’

Charlotte hastened away, glad to wipe her tears when outside the door. Poor Bustle had been watching for his master ever since his departure, and hearing the sounds of arrival, was wild to escape from his prison. He rushed out the moment the door was open, and was scratching to be let into the drawing-room before Charlotte could come up with him. He dashed in, laid his head on Amabel’s knee, and wagged his tail for welcome; gave the same greeting to Mr. and Mrs. Edmonstone, but only for a moment, for he ran restlessly seeking round the room, came to the door, and by his wistful looks made Charlotte let him out. She followed him, and dropping on her knees as soon as she was outside, pressed her forehead to his glossy black head, whispered that it was of no use, he would never come back. The dog burst from her, and the next moment was smelling and wagging his tail at a portmanteau, which he knew as well as she did, and she could hardly refrain from a great outburst of sobbing as she thought what joy its arrival had hitherto been.

Suddenly Bustle bounded away, and as Charlotte stood trying to compose herself enough to return to the drawing-room, she heard the poor fellow whining to be let in at Guy’s bedroom-door. At the same time the drawing-room door opened, and anxious that Amy should neither see nor hear him, she ran after him, admitted him, and shut herself in with him in the dark, where, with her hands in his long silky curls, and sitting on the ground, she sobbed over him as long as he would submit to her caresses.

Amabel meantime returned to her room, and looked

round on its well-known aspect with a sad smile, as she thought of the prayer with which she had quitted it on her bridal day, and did not feel as if it had been unanswered; for surely the hand of a Father had been with her to support her through her great affliction.

Though she said she was very well, her mother made her go to bed at once, and Laura attended on her with a sort of frightened, respectful tenderness, hardly able to bear her looks of gratitude. The first time the two sisters were alone, Amabel said, 'Philip is much better.'

Laura, who was settling some things on the table, started back and coloured, then unable to resist the desire of hearing of him, looked earnestly at her sister.

'He is gone to Corfu,' continued Amabel. 'He only kept Arnaud three days after we were gone, and Arnaud overtook us at Geneva, saying his strength had improved wonderfully. Will you give me my basket? I should like to read you a piece of a note he sent me.'

Laura brought it, and Amabel, holding her hand, looked up at her face, which she vainly tried to keep in order. 'Dearest, I have been very sorry for you, and so has Guy.'

'Amy!' and Laura found herself giving way to her tears, in spite of all her previous exhortations to Charlotte about self-control; 'my own, own sister!' To have Amy at home was an unspeakable comfort.

Papa and mamma were both as kind as possible to Philip, continued Amabel; 'but they could not bear to enter on *that*. So I told him you had told all, and he was very glad.'

'He was not displeased at my betraying him?' exclaimed Laura.

'Oh, no! he was glad; he said it was a great relief, for he was very anxious about you, Laura. He has been so kind to me,' said Amabel, so earnestly, that Laura received another comfort, that of knowing that her sister's indignation against him had all passed by.

‘Now I will read you what he says. You see his writing is quite itself again.’

But Laura observed that Amabel only held towards her the ‘Lady Morville’ on the outside, keeping the note to herself, and reading, ‘I have continued to gain strength since you went; so that there is no further need of detaining Arnaud. I have twice been out of doors, and am convinced that I am equal to the journey; indeed, it is hardly possible for me to endure remaining here any longer.’ She read no more, but folded it up, saying, ‘I had rather no one saw the rest. He makes himself so unhappy about that unfortunate going to Sondrio, that he says what is only painful to hear. I am glad he is able to join his regiment, for a change will be the best thing for him.’

She laid her head on the pillow as if she had done with the subject, and Laura did not venture to pursue it, but went down to hear her mother’s account of her.

Mrs. Edmonstone was feeling it a great comfort to have her son to talk to again, and availed herself of it to tell him of Philip, while Laura was absent, and then to return to speak of Amy on Laura’s re-entrance. She said, all through the journey, Amy had been as passive and tranquil as possible, chiefly leaning back in the carriage in silence, excepting that when they finally left the view of the snowy mountains, she gazed after them as long as the least faint cloud-like summit was visible. Still she could not sleep, except that now and then she dozed a little in the carriage, but at night she heard every hour strike in turn, and lay awake through all, nor had she shed one tear since her mother had joined her. Mrs. Edmonstone’s anxiety was very great, for she said she knew Amy must pay for that unnatural calmness, and the longer it was before it broke down, the worse it would be for her. However, she was at home, that was one thing to be thankful for, and happen what might, it could not be as distressing as if it had been abroad.

Another night of ‘calm unrest,’ and Amabel rose

in the morning, at her usual hour, to put on the garments of her widowhood, where she had last stood as a bride. Charles was actually startled by her entering the dressing-room, just as she used to do, before breakfast, to read with him, and her voice was as steady as ever. She breakfasted with the family, and came up afterwards with Laura to unpack her dressing-case, and take out the little treasures that she and her husband had enjoyed buying in the continental towns, as presents for the home party.

All this, for which she had previously prepared herself, she underwent as quietly as possible ; but something unexpected came on her. Charlotte, trying to pet and comfort her in every possible way, brought in all the best flowers still lingering in the garden, and among them a last blossom of the Noisette rose, the same, of which Guy had been twisting a spray, while he first told her of his love.

It was too much. It recalled his perfect health and vigour, his light activity, and enjoyment of life, and something came on her of the sensation we feel for an insect, one moment full of joyous vitality, the next, crushed and still. She had hitherto thought of his feverish thirst and fainting weariness being at rest, and felt the relief, or else followed his spirit to its repose, and rejoiced ; but now the whole scene brought back what he once was ; his youthful, agile frame, his eyes dancing in light, his bounding step, his gay whistle, the strong hand that had upheld her on the precipice, the sure foot that had carried aid to the drowning sailors, the arm that was to have been her stay for life, all came on her in contrast with—death ! The thought swept over her, carrying away every other, and she burst into tears.

The tears would have their course ; she could not restrain them when once they began, and her struggles to check them only brought an increase of them. Her sobs grew so violent that Laura, much alarmed, made a sign to Charlotte to fetch her mother ; and Mrs.

Edmonstone, coming in haste, found it was indeed the beginning of a frightful hysterical attack. The bodily frame had been overwrought to obey the mental firmness and composure, and now nature asserted her rights; the hysterics returned again and again, and when it seemed as if exhaustion had at length produced quiet, the opening of a door, or a sound in the distance, would renew all again.

It was not till night had closed in, that Mrs. Edmonstone was at all satisfied about her, and had at length the comfort of seeing her fall into a sound deep sleep; such an unbroken dreamless sleep, as had scarcely visited her since she first went to Recoara. Even this sleep did not restore her; she became very unwell, and both Dr. Mayerne and her mother insisted on her avoiding the least exertion or agitation. She was quite submissive, only begging earnestly to be allowed to see Mr. Ross, saying she knew it would do her good rather than harm, and promising to let him leave her the instant she found it too much for her; and though Mrs. Edmonstone was reluctant and afraid, they agreed that as she was so reasonable and docile, she ought to be allowed to judge for herself.

She begged that he might come after church on All Saints' day. He came, and after his first greeting of peace, Mrs. Edmonstone signed to him to read at once, instead of speaking to her. The beautiful lesson for the day overcame Mrs. Edmonstone so much that she was obliged to go out of Amabel's sight; but as the words were read, Amy's face recovered once more the serenity that had been swept away by the sight of the flowers. Peace had returned, and when the calm everyday words of the service were over, she held out her hand to Mr. Ross, and said, 'Thank you, that was very nice. Now talk to me.'

It was a difficult request, but Mr. Ross understood her, and talked to her as she sought, in a gentle, deep, high strain of hope and faith, very calm and soothing, and with a fatherly kindness that was very pleasant

from him who had baptized her, taught her, and whom she had last seen blessing her and her husband. It ended by her looking up to him when it was time for him to go, and saying, 'Thank you. You will come again when you have time, I hope. My love to dear Mary, I should like to see her soon, but I knew you would do me more good than anybody, and know better how it feels.'

Mr. Ross knew she meant that he must better understand her loss, because he was a widower, and was greatly touched, though he only answered by a blessing, a farewell, and a promise to come very soon to see her again.

Amabel was right, the peace which he had recalled, and the power of resignation that had returned, had a better effect on her than all her mother's precautions; she began to improve, and in a few days more was able to leave her bed, and lie on the sofa in the dressing-room, though she was still so weak and languid that this was as much as she could attempt. Any exertion was to be carefully guarded against, and her tears now flowed so easily that she was obliged to keep a check on them lest they might again overpower her. Mr. Ross came again and again, and she was able to tell him much of the grounds for her great happiness in Guy, hear how entirely he had understood him, and be assured that she had done right, and not taken an undue responsibility on herself by the argument she had used to summon Philip, that last evening. She had begun to make herself uneasy about this; for she said she believed she was thinking of nothing but Guy, and had acted on impulse; and she was very glad Mr. Ross did not think it wrong, while Mr. Ross meanwhile was thinking how fears and repentance mingle with the purest, sweetest, holiest deeds.

She was able now to take pleasure in seeing Mary Ross; she wrote to Philip at Corfu, and sent for Markham to begin to settle the executor's business. Poor Markham! the Edmonstones thought he looked ten

years older when he arrived, and after his inquiry for Lady Morville, his *grunt* almost amounted to a sob. The first thing he did was to give Mrs. Edmonstone a note, and a little box sent from Mrs. Ashford. The note was to say that Mrs. Ashford had intended for her wedding present, a little cross made out of part of the wood of the wreck, which she now thought it best to send to Mrs. Edmonstone, that she might judge whether Lady Morville would like to see it.

Mrs. Edmonstone's judgment was to carry it at once to Amabel, and she was right, for the pleasure she took in it was indescribable. She fondled it, set it up by her on her little table, made Charlotte put it in different places that she might see what point of view suited it best, had it given back to her, held it in her hands caressingly, and said she must write at once to Mrs. Ashford to thank her for understanding her so well. There was scarcely one of the mourners to be pitied more than Markham; for the love he had set on Sir Guy had been intense, compounded of feudal affection, devoted admiration, and paternal care—and that he, the very flower of the whole race, should thus have been cut down in the full blossom of his youth and hopes, was almost more than the old man could bear or understand. It was a great sorrow, too, that he should be buried so far away from his forefathers; and the hearing it was by his own desire, did not satisfy him, he sighed over it still, and seemed to derive a shade of comfort only when he was told that there was to be a tablet in Redclyffe church to the memory of Guy, sixth baronet.

In the evening Markham became very confidential with Charles; telling him about the grievous mourning and lamentation at Redclyffe, when the bells rung a knell instead of greeting the young master and his bride, and how there was scarcely one in the parish that did not feel as if they had lost a son or a brother. He also told more and more of Sir Guy's excellence, and talked of fears of his own, especially last Christmas;

that the boy was too unlike other people, too good to live; and lastly, he indulged in a little abuse of Captain Morville, which did Charles's heart good, at the same time as it amused him to think how Markham would recollect it, when he came to hear of Laura's engagement.

In the course of the next day, Markham had his conference with Lady Morville in the dressing-room, and brought her two or three precious parcels, which he would not, for the world, have given into any other hands. He could hardly bear to look at her in her widow's cap, and behaved to her with a manner varying between his deference and respect to the Lady of Redclyffe, and his fatherly fondness for the wife of "his boy." As to her legal powers, he would have thought them foolishly bestowed, if they had been conferred by any one, save his own Sir Guy, and he began by not much liking to act with her; but he found her so clear-headed that he was much surprised to find a woman could have so much good sense, and began to look forward with some satisfaction to being her prime minister. They understood each other very well; Amabel's good sense and way of attending to the one matter in hand, kept her from puzzling and alarming herself by thinking she had more to do than she could ever understand or accomplish; she knew it was Guy's work and a charge he had given her,—a great proof of his confidence,—and she did all that was required of her very well, so that matters were put in train to be completed when she should be of age, in the course of the next January.

When Markham left her she was glad to be alone and to open her parcels. There was nothing here to make her hysterical, for she was going to contemplate the living soul, and felt almost as if it was again being alone with her husband. There were his most prized and used books, covered with marks and written notes; there was Laura's drawing of Sintram, which had lived with him in his rooms at Oxford; there was a roll of

music, and there was his desk. The first thing when she opened it was a rough piece of spar, wrapped in paper, on which was written 'M. A. D., Sept. 18.' She remembered what he had told her of little Marianne's gift. The next thing made her heart thrill, for it was a slip of pencilling in her own writing, 'Little things, on little wings, bear little souls to heaven.'

Her own letters tied up together, those few that she had written in the short time they were separated just before their marriage! Could that be only six months ago? A great bundle of Charles's and of Mrs. Edmonstone's, those she might like to read another time, but not now. Many other papers, letters signed S. B. Dixon, which she threw aside, notes of lectures, and memoranda, only precious for the handwriting, but when she came to the lower division she found it full of verses, almost all the poetry he had ever written.

There were the classical translations that used to make him inaccurate, a scrap of a very boyish epic about King Arthur, beginning with a storm at Tintagel, sundry half ballads, the verses he was suspected of, and never would show that first summer at Hollywell, and a very touching vision of his fair young mother. Except a translation or two, some words written to suit their favourite airs, (a thing that used to seem to come as easily to him as singing to a bird,) and a few lively mock heroic accounts of walks or parties, which had all been public property: there was no more that she could believe to have been composed till last year, for he was more disposed to versify in sorrow than in joy. There were a good many written during his loneliness, for his reflections had a tendency to flow into verse, and pouring them out thus had been a great solace. The lines were often imperfect and irregular, but not one that was not deep, pure, and genuine, and here and there scattered with passages of exquisite beauty and harmony, and full of power and grace. No one could have looked at them without owning in them the marks of a thorough poet; but this was not

what the wife was seeking, and when she perceived it, though it made her face beam with a sort of satisfied pride, it was a secondary thing. She was studying not his intellect but his soul; she did not care whether he would have been a poet, what she looked for was the record of the sufferings and struggles of the sad six months when his character was established, strengthened, and settled.

She found it. There was much to which she alone had the clue, too deep, and too obscurely hinted to be understood at a glance. She met with such evidence of suffering as made her shudder and weep, tokens of the dark thoughts that had gathered round him, of the manful spirit of penitence and patience that had been his stay, and of the gleams that lighted his darkest hours, and showed he had never been quite forsaken. Now and then came a reference which brought home what he had told her; how the thought of his Verena had cheered him when he dared not hope she would be restored. Best of all were the lines written when the radiance of Christmas was, once for all, dispersing the gloom, and the vision opening on him, which he was now realizing. In reading them, she felt the same marvellous sympathy of subdued wondering joy in the victory, of which she had partaken as she knelt beside his deathbed. These were the last; he had been too happy for poetry, except one or two scraps in Switzerland, and these had been hers from the time she had detected them.

No wonder Amabel almost lived on those papers! It would not be too much to say she was very happy in her own way when alone with them; the desk on a chair by her sofa. They were too sacred for any one else, she did not for many weeks show one even to her mother; but to her they were like a renewal of his presence, soothing the craving after him that had been growing on her ever since the first few days when his sustaining power had not passed away. As she sorted them, and made out their dates, finding fresh stores of meaning at each fresh perusal; she learnt through

them, as well as through her own trial, so patiently borne, to enter into his character even more fully than when he was in her sight. Mrs. Edmonstone, who had at first been inclined to dread her constant dwelling on them, soon perceived that they were her great aids through this sad winter.

She had much pleasure in receiving the portrait, which was sent her by Mr. Shene. It was a day or two before she could resolve to look at it, or feel that she could do so calmly. It was an unfinished sketch, taken more with a view to the future picture than to the likeness; but Guy's was a face to be better represented by being somewhat idealized than by copying merely the material form of the features. An ordinary artist might have made him like a Morville, but Mr. Shene had shown all that art could convey of his individual self, with almost one of his unearthly looks. The beautiful eyes, with somewhat of their peculiar lightsomeness, the flexible look of the lip, the upward pose of the head, the set of that lock of hair that used to wave in the wind, the animated position, 'just ready for a start,' as Charles used to call it, were recalled as far as was in the power of chalk and crayon, but so as to remind Amabel of him more as one belonging to heaven than to earth. The picture used to be on her mantel shelf all night, the shipwreck cross before it, and Sintram and Redcliffe on each side; and she brought it into the dressing-room with her in the morning, setting it up opposite to the sofa, before settling herself.

Her days were much alike. She felt far from well, or capable of exertion, and was glad it was thought right to keep her entirely up stairs; she only wished to spare her mother anxiety, by being submissive to her care, in case these cares should be the last for her. She did not dwell on the future, nor ask herself whether she looked for life or death. Guy had bidden her not desire the last, and she believed she did not form a wish; but there was repose to her in the belief that she

ought not to conceal from herself that there was more than ordinary risk, and that it was right to complete all her affairs in this world, and she was silent when her mother tried to interest her in prospects that might cheer her; as if afraid to fasten on them, and finding more peace in entire submission, than in feeding herself on hope that must be coupled with fear.

Christmas-day was not allowed to pass without being a festival for her, in her quiet room, where she lay, full of musings on his lonely Christmas night last year, his verses folded among her precious books, and the real joy of the season more within her grasp than in the turmoil of last year. She was not afraid *now* to let herself fancy his voice in the Angel's Song, and the rainbow was shining on her cloud.

CHAPTER XVI.

The coldness from my heart is gone,
But still the weight is there,
And thoughts which I abhor will come
To tempt me to despair.

SOUTHEY.

A MABEL'S one anxiety was for Philip. For a long time nothing was heard of him at Hollywell, and she began to fear that he might have been less fit to take care of himself, than he had persuaded her to believe. When at length tidings reached them, it was through the De Courcys. 'Poor Morville,' wrote Maurice, 'had been carried ashore at Corfu, in the stupor of a second attack of fever. He had been in extreme danger for some time, and though now on the mend, was still unable to give any account of himself.'

In effect, it was a relapse of the former disease, chiefly affecting the brain, and his impatience to leave Recoara, and free himself from Arnaud, had been a symptom of its approach, though it fortunately did not absolutely overpower him till after he had embarked for Corfu, and was in the way to be tended with the greatest solicitude. Long after the fever was subdued, and his strength returning, his mind was astray; and even, when torturing delusions ceased, and he resumed the perception of surrounding objects, memory and reflection wavered in dizzy confusion, more distressing than either his bodily weakness, or the perpetual pain in his head, which no remedy could relieve.

The first date to which he could afterwards recur, though for more than a week he had apparently been fully himself, was a time when he was sitting in an easy chair by the window, obliged to avert his heavy eyes from the dazzling waters of the Coreyran bay, where Ulysses' transformed ship gleamed in the sunshine, and the rich purple hills of Albania sloped upwards in the distance. James Thorndale was, as usual, with him, and was explaining that there had been a consultation between the doctor and the colonel, and they had decided that as there was not much chance of restoring his health in that climate in the spring—

‘Spring!’ he interrupted with surprise and eagerness. ‘Is it spring?’

‘Hardly—except that there is no winter here. This is the 8th of January.’

He let his head fall on his hand again, and listened with indifference when told he was to be sent to England at once, under the care of his servant, Bolton, and Mr. Thorndale himself, who was resolved to see him safe in his sister's hands. He made no objection; he had become used to be passive, and one place was much the same to him as another; so he merely assented, without a question about the arrangements. Presently, however, he looked up, and inquired for his letters. Though he had done so before, the request had always been evaded, until now he spoke in a manner which decided his friend on giving him all except one with broad black edges, and Broadstone post-mark; the effect of which, it was thought, might be very injurious to his shattered nerves and spirits.

However, he turned over the other letters without interest, just glancing languidly through them, looked disappointed, and exclaimed, ‘None from Hollywell! Has nothing been heard from them? Thorndale, I insist on knowing whether De Courcy has heard anything of Lady Morville.’

‘He has heard of her arrival in England.’

‘My sister mentions that—more than two months

ago—I can hardly believe she has not written, if she was able. She promised, yet how can I expect—’ then interrupting himself, he added authoritatively, ‘Thorndale, is there no letter for me? I see there is. Let me have it.’

His friend could not but comply, and had no reason to regret having done so; for after reading it twice, though he sighed deeply, and the tears were in his eyes, he was more calm and less oppressed than he had been at any time since his arrival in Corfu. He was unable to write, but Colonel Deane had undertaken to write to Mrs. Henley to announce his coming, and as the cause of his silence must be known at Hollywell, he resolved to let Amabel’s letter wait for a reply till his arrival in England.

It was on a chilly day in February that Mrs. Henley drove to the station to meet her brother, looking forward with a sister’s satisfaction to nursing his recovery, and feeling (for she had a heart after all) as if it was a renewal of the days which she regarded with a tenderness mixed with contempt, when all was confidence between the brother and sister, the days of nonsense and romance. She hoped that now poor Philip, who had acted hastily on his romance, and ruined his own prospects for her sake in his boyish days, had a chance of having it all made up to him, and reigning at Redclyffe according to her darling wish.

As she anxiously watched the arrival of the train, she recognised Mr. Thorndale, whom she had known in his school-days as Philip’s protégé, but could that be her brother? It was his height, indeed, but his slow weary step, as he crossed the platform, and left the care of his baggage to others, was so unlike his prompt, independent air, that she could hardly believe it to be himself, till, with his friend, he actually advanced to the carriage, and then she saw far deeper traces of illness than she was prepared for. A confusion of words took place; greetings on one hand, and partings on the other, for James Thorndale was going on by the train,

and made only a few minutes' halt in which to assure Mrs. Henley that though the landing and the journey had knocked up his patient to-day, he was much better since leaving Corfu, and to beg Philip to write as soon as possible. The bell rang, he rushed back, and was whirled away.

'Then you are better,' said Mrs. Henley, anxiously surveying her brother. 'You are sadly altered! You must let us take good care of you.'

'Thank you! I knew you would be ready to receive me, though I fear I am not very good company.'

'Say no more, my dearest brother. You know both Dr. Henley and myself have made it our first object that our house should be your home.'

'Thank you.'

'This salubrious air must benefit you,' she added. 'How thin you are! Are you very much fatigued?'

'Rather,' said Philip, who was leaning back wearily; but the next moment he exclaimed, 'What do you hear from Hollywell?'

'There is no news yet.'

'Do you know how she is? When did you hear of her?'

'About a week ago; when she wrote to inquire for you.'

'She did? What did she say of herself?'

'Nothing particular, poor little thing; I believe she is always on the sofa. My aunt would like nothing so well as making a great fuss about her.'

'Have you any objection to show me her letter?' said Philip, unable to bear hearing Amabel thus spoken of, yet desirous to learn all he could respecting her.

'I have not preserved it,' was the answer. 'My correspondence is so extensive that there would be no limit to the accumulation if I did not destroy the trivial letters.'

There was a sudden flush on Philip's pale face that caused his sister to pause in her measured, self-satisfied speech, and ask if he was in pain.

‘No,’ he replied shortly, and Margaret pondered on his strange manner, little guessing what profanation her mention of Amabel’s letter had seemed to him, or how it jarred on him to hear this exaggerated likeness of his own self-complacent speeches.

She was much shocked and grieved to see him so much more unwell than she had expected. He was unfit for anything but to go to bed on his arrival. Dr. Henley said the system had received a severe shock, and it would be long before the effects would be shaken off; but that there was no fear but his health would be completely restored if he would give himself entire rest.

There was no danger that Margaret would not lavish care enough on her brother. She waited on him in his room all the next day, bringing him everything he could want, and trying to make him come down stairs, for she thought sitting alone there very bad for his spirits; but he said he had a letter to write, and very curious she was to know why he was so long doing it, and why he did not tell her to whom it was addressed. However, she saw when it was put into the post-bag, that it was for Lady Morville.

At last, too late to see any of the visitors who had called to inquire, when the evening had long closed in, she had the satisfaction of seeing Philip enter the drawing-room, and settling him in the most comfortable of her easy chairs on one side of the fire to wait till the doctor returned for dinner. The whole apartment was most luxurious, spacious, and richly furnished, the fire, in its brilliant steel setting, glancing on all around, and illuminating her own stately presence, and rich glacé silk, as she sat opposite her brother cutting open the leaves of one of the books of the club over which she presided. She felt that this was something like attaining one of the objects for which she used to say and think she married,—namely, to be able to receive her brother in a comfortable home. If only he would but look more like himself.

‘Do you like a cushion for your head, Philip? Is it better?’

‘Better since morning, thank you.’

‘Did those headaches come on before your second illness?’

‘I can’t distinctly remember.’

‘Ah! I cannot think how the Edmonstones could leave you. I shall always blame them for that relapse.’

‘It had nothing to do with it. Their remaining was impossible.’

‘On Amabel’s account? No, poor thing, I don’t blame her, for she must have been quite helpless; but it was exactly like my aunt, to have but one idea at a time. Charles used to be the idol, and now it is Amy, I suppose.’

‘If anything could have made it more intolerable for me, it would have been detaining them there for my sake, at such a time.’

‘Ah! I felt a great deal for you. You must have been very sorry for that poor little Amy. She was very kind in writing while you were ill. How did she contrive, poor child? I suppose you took all the head work for her?’

‘I? I was nothing but a burden.’

‘Were you still so very ill?’ said Margaret, tenderly. ‘I am sure you must have been neglected.’

‘Would that I had!’ muttered Philip, so low that she did not catch the words. Then aloud,—‘No care could have been greater than was taken for me. It was as if no one had been ill but myself, and the whole thought of every one had been for me.’

‘Then Amabel managed well, poor thing? We do sometimes see those weak soft characters—’

‘Sister!’ he interrupted.

‘Have not you told me so yourself?’

‘I was a fool, or worse,’ said he, in a tone of suffering. ‘No words can describe what she proved herself.’

‘Self-possessed? energetic?’ asked Mrs. Henley, with whom these were the first of qualities; and as

her brother paused from repugnance to speak of Amabel to one so little capable of comprehending her, she proceeded: 'No doubt she did the best she could, but she must have been quite inexperienced. It was a very wrong thing in the poor youth to make her executrix. I wonder the will was valid; but I suppose you took care of that.'

'I did nothing.'

'Did you see it?'

'My uncle showed it to me.'

'Then you can tell me what I want to hear, for no one has told me anything. I suppose my uncle is to be guardian.'

'No; Lady Morville.'

'You don't mean it? Most lover-like indeed. That poor girl to manage that great property! Everything left to her?' said Mrs. Henley, continuing her catechism in spite of the unwillingness of his replies.

'Were there any legacies? I know of Miss Wellwood's.'

'That to Dixon's daughter, and my own, he answered

'Yours? How was it that I never heard of it? What is it?'

'Ten thousand,' said Philip, sadly.

'I am delighted to hear it!' cried Margaret. 'Very proper of Sir Guy—very proper indeed, poor youth. It is well thought of to soften the disappointment.'

Philip started forward. 'Disappointment!' exclaimed he, with horror.

'You need not look as if I wished to commit murder,' said his sister, smiling. 'Have you forgotten that it depends on whether it is a son or daughter?'

His dismay was not lessened. 'Do you mean to say that this is to come on me if the child is a daughter?'

'Ah! you were so young when the entail was made, that you knew nothing of it. Female heirs were expressly excluded. There was some aunt whom old Sir Guy passed over, and settled the property on my father and you, failing his own male heirs.'

‘No one would take advantage of such a chance,’ said Philip.

‘Do not make any rash resolutions, my dear brother, whatever you do,’ said Margaret. ‘You have still the same fresh romantic generous spirit of self-sacrifice that is generally so soon worn out, but you must not let it allow you—’

‘Enough of this,’ said Philip, hastily, for every word was a dagger.

‘Ah! you are right not to dwell on the uncertainty. I am almost sorry I told you,’ said Margaret. ‘Tell me about Miss Wellwood’s legacy,’ she continued, desirous of changing the subject. ‘I want to know the truth of it, for every one is talking of it.’

‘How comes the world to know of it?’

‘There have been reports ever since his death, and now it has been paid, whatever it is, on Lady Morville’s coming of age. Do you know what it is? The last story I was told was, that it was £20,000, to found a convent to pray for his grand—’

‘Five thousand for her hospital,’ interrupted Philip. ‘Sister!’ he added, speaking with effort, ‘it was for that hospital that he made the request for which we—persecuted him.’

‘Ah! I thought so. I could have told you so!’ cried Margaret, triumphant in her sagacity, but astonished, as her brother started up and stood looking at her, as if he could hardly resolve to give credit to her words. ‘You—thought—so,’ he repeated slowly.

‘I guessed it from the first. He was always with that set, and I thought it a very bad thing for him; but as it was only a guess, it was not worth while to mention it: besides, the cheque seemed full evidence. It was the general course, not the individual action.’

‘If you thought so, why not mention it to me? Oh! sister, what would you not have spared me!’

‘I might have done so if it had appeared that it might lead to his exculpation; but you were so fully convinced that his whole course confirmed the sus-

pitions, that a mere vague idea was not worth dwelling on. Your general opinion of him satisfied me.'

'I cannot blame you,' was all his reply, as he sat down again, with his face averted from the light.

And Mrs. Henley was doubtful whether he meant that she had been judicious! She spoke again, unconscious of the agony each word inflicted.

'Poor youth! we were mistaken in those facts, and of course, all is forgiven and forgotten now; but he certainly had a tremendous temper. I shall never forget that exhibition. Perhaps poor Amabel is saved much unhappiness.'

'Once for all,' said Philip, sternly, 'let me never hear you speak of him thus. We were both blind to a greatness of soul and purity of heart that we shall never meet again. Yours was only prejudice; mine, I must call by a darker name. Remember, that he and his wife are only to be spoken of with reverence.'

He composed himself to silence; and Margaret, after looking at him for some moments in wonder, began in a sort of exculpatory tone:

'Of course we owe him a great deal of gratitude. It was very kind and proper to come to you when you were ill, and his death must have been a terrible shock. He was a fine young man; amiable, very attractive in manner.'

'No more!' muttered Philip.

'That, you always said of him,' continued she, not hearing; 'but you have no need to reproach yourself. You always acted the part of a true friend; did full justice to his many good qualities, and only sought his real good.'

'Every word you speak is the bitterest satire on me,' said Philip, goaded into rousing himself for a moment. 'Say no more, unless you would drive me distracted!'

Margaret was obliged to be silent, and marvel, while her brother sat motionless, leaning back in his chair till Dr. Henley came in; and, after a few words to him, went on talking to his wife, till dinner was an-

nounced. Philip went with them into the dining-room, but had scarcely sat down before he said he could not stay, and returned to the drawing-room sofa. He said he only wanted quiet and darkness, and sent his sister and her husband back to their dinner.

‘What has he been doing?’ said the Doctor; ‘here is his pulse up to a hundred again. How can he have raised it?’

‘He only came down an hour ago, and has been sitting still ever since.’

‘Talking?’

‘Yes; and, there, perhaps, I was rather imprudent. I did not know he could so little bear to hear poor Sir Guy’s name mentioned; and, besides, he did not know, till I told him, that he had so much chance of Redclyffe. He did not know the entail excluded daughters.’

‘Did he not? That accounts for it. I should like to see the man who could hear coolly that he was so near such a property. This suspense is unlucky just now; very much against him. You must turn his thoughts from it as much as possible.’

All the next day, Mrs. Henley wondered why her brother’s spirits were so much depressed, resisting every attempt to amuse or cheer them; but, on the third, she thought some light was thrown on the matter. She was at breakfast with the doctor when the post came in, and there was a black-edged letter for Captain Morville, evidently from Amabel. She took it up at once to his room. He stretched out his hand for it eagerly, but laid it down, and would not open it while she was in the room.

The instant she was gone, however, he broke the seal and read:

Hollywell, February 20th.

MY DEAR PHILIP,—Thank you much for writing to me. It was a great comfort to see your writing again, and to hear of your being safe in our own country. We had been very anxious about you, though we did not hear of your illness till the worst was over. I am

very glad you are at St. Mildred's, for I am sure Margaret must be very careful of you, and Stylehurst air must be good for you. Every one here is well; Charles growing almost active, and looking better than I ever saw him. I wish I could tell you how nice and quiet a winter it has been; it has been a great blessing to me in every way, so many things have come to me to enjoy. Mr. Ross has come to me every Sunday, and often in the week, and has been so very kind. I think talking to him will be a great pleasure to you when you are here again. You will like to hear that Mr. Shene has sent me the picture, and the pleasure it gives me increases every day. Indeed, I am so well off in every way, [that you must not grieve yourself about me, though I thank you very much for what you say. Laura reads to me all the evening from dinner to tea. I am much better than I was in the winter, and am enjoying the soft spring air from the open window, making it seem as if it was much later in the year.

Good by, my dear cousin; may God bless and comfort you. Remember, that after all it was God's will, not your doing; and therefore, as he said himself, all is at it should be, and so it will surely be.

Your affectionate cousin,

AMABEL F. MORVILLE.

Childishly simple as this letter might be called, with its set of facts without comment, and the very commonplace words of consolation, it spoke volumes to Philip of the spirit in which it was written, resignation, pardon, soothing, and a desire that her farewell, perhaps her last, should carry with it a token of her perfect forgiveness. Everything from Amabel did him good, and he was so perceptibly better, that his sister exclaimed, when she was next alone with Dr. Henley, 'I understand it all, poor fellow; I thought long ago he had some secret attachment, and now I see it was to Amabel Edmonstone.'

‘To Lady Morville?’

‘Yes. You know how constantly he was at Hollywell, my aunt so fond of him! I don’t suppose Amy knew of it; and, of course, she could not be blamed for accepting such an offer as Sir Guy’s; besides, she never had much opinion of her own.’

‘How? No bad speculation for him. She must have a handsome jointure; but what are your grounds?’

‘Everything. Don’t you remember he would not go to the marriage? He mentions her almost like a saint; can’t hear her name from any one else—keeps her letter to open alone, is more revived by it than by anything else. Ah! depend upon it, it was to avoid her, poor fellow, that he refused to go to Venice with them.’

‘Their going to nurse him is not as if Sir Guy suspected it.’

‘I don’t suppose he did, nor Amy either. No one ever had so much power over himself.’

Philip would not have thanked his sister for her surmise, but it was so far in his favour that it made her avoid the subject, and he was thus spared from hearing much of Amabel or of Redclyffe. It was bad enough without this. Sometimes in nursery tales, a naughty child, under the care of a fairy, is chained to an exaggeration of himself and his own faults, and rendered a slave to this hateful self. The infliction he underwent in his sister’s house was somewhat analogous; for Mrs. Henley’s whole character, and especially her complacent speeches, were a strong resemblance of his own in the days he most regretted. He had, ever since her marriage, regarded her as a man looks at a fallen idol; but never had her alteration been so clear to him, as he had not spent much time with her, making her short visits, and passing the chief of each day at Stylehurst. Now, he was almost entirely at her mercy, and her unvarying kindness to him caused her deterioration to pain him all the more;

while each self-assertion, or harsh judgment, sounded on his ear like a repetition of his worst and most hateful presumption. She little guessed what she made him endure, for he had resumed his wonted stoicism of demeanour, though the hardened crust that had once grown over his feelings had been roughly torn away, leaving an extreme soreness and tenderness to which an acute pang was given whenever he was reminded, not only of his injuries to Guy, but of the pride and secret envy that had been their root.

At the same time he disappointed her by his continued reserve and depression. The confidence she had forfeited was never to be restored, and she was the last person to know how incapable she was of receiving it, or how low she had sunk in her self-exaltation.

He was soon able to resume the hours of the family, but was still far from well; suffering from langour, pain in the head, want of sleep and appetite; and an evening feverishness. He was unequal to deep reading, and was in no frame for light books; he could not walk far, and his sister's literary coteries, which he had always despised, were at present beyond his powers of endurance. She hoped that society would divert his thoughts and raise his spirits, and arranged her parties with a view to him; but he never could stay long in the room, and Dr. Henley, who, though proud of his wife and her talents, had little pleasure in her learned circle, used to aid and abet his escape.

Thus Philip got through the hours as best he might; idly turning the pages of new club-books, wandering on the hills till he tired himself; sitting down to rest in the damp air, coming home chilled and fatigued, and lying on the sofa with his eyes shut, to avoid conversation, all the evening. Neither strength, energy, nor intellect would serve him for more; and this, with the load and the stings of a profound repentance, formed his history through the next fortnight.

He used often to stand gazing at the slowly-rising walls of Miss Wellwood's buildings, and the only time he exerted himself in his old way to put down any folly in conversation, was when he silenced some of the nonsense talked about her, and evinced his own entire approval of her proceedings.

CHAPTER XVII.

Beneath a tapering ash-tree's shade,
Three graves are by each other laid.
Around the very place doth brood
A strange and holy quietude.

BAPTISTERY.

LATE on the afternoon of the 6th of March, Mary Ross entered by the half-opened front door at Hollywell, just as Charles appeared slowly descending the stairs.

'Well! how is she?' asked Mary, eagerly.

'Poor little dear!' he answered, with a sigh; 'she looks very nice and comfortable.'

'What, you have seen her?'

'I am this moment leaving her room.'

'She is going on well, I hope?'

'Perfectly well. There is one comfort at least,' said Charles, drawing himself down the last step.

'Dear Amy! And the babe—did you see it?'

'Yes; the little creature was lying by her, and she put her hand on it, and gave one of those smiles that are so terribly like his; but I could not have spoken about it for the world. Such fools we be!' concluded Charles, with an attempt at a smile.

'It is healthy?'

'All a baby ought to be, they say, all that could be expected of it, except the not being of the right sort, and if Amy does not mind that, I don't know who should,' and Charles deposited himself on the sofa, heaving a deep sigh, intended to pass for the conclusion of the exertion.

‘Then you think she is not disappointed?’

‘Certainly not. The first thing she said when she was told it was a girl was, ‘I’m so glad!’ and she does seem very happy with it, poor little thing! In fact, mamma thinks she had so little expected that it would go well with herself, or with it, that now it is all like a surprise.’

There was a silence, first broken by Charles saying, ‘You must be content with me—I can’t send for any one. Bustle has taken papa and Charlotte for a walk, and Laura is on guard over Amy, for we have made mamma go and lie down. It was high time, after sitting up two nights, and meaning to sit up a third.’

‘Has she really—can she bear it?’

‘Yes; I am afraid I have trained her in setting up, and Amy and all of us know that anxiety hurts her more than fatigue. She would only lie awake worrying herself, instead of sitting peaceably by the fire, holding the baby, or watching Amy, and having a quiet cry when she is asleep. For, after all, it is very sad!’ Charles was trying to brave his feelings, but did not succeed very well. ‘Yesterday morning I was properly frightened. I came into the dressing-room, and found mamma crying so, that I fully believed it was all wrong; but she was just coming to tell us, and was only overcome by thinking of not having *him* to call first, and how happy he would have been.’

‘And the dear Amy herself?’

‘I can’t tell. She is a wonderful person for keeping herself composed when she ought. I see she has his picture in full view, but she says not a word, except that mamma saw her to-day, when she thought no one was looking, fondling the little thing, and whispering to it,—‘Guy’s baby!’ and ‘Guy’s little messenger!’ Charles gave up the struggle, and fairly cried, but in a moment rallying his usual tone, he went on, half laughing,—‘To be sure, what a morsel of a creature it is! It is awful to see anything so small calling itself a specimen of humanity!’

‘It is your first acquaintance with infant humanity, I suppose? Pray, did you ever see a baby?’

‘Not to look at. In fact, Mary, I consider it a proof of your being a rational woman that you have not asked me whether it is pretty.’

‘I thought you no judge of the article.’

‘No, it was not to inspect it that Amy sent for me; though after all it was for a business I would almost as soon undertake, a thing I would not do for any other living creature.’

‘Then I know what it is. To write some kind message to Captain Morville. Just like the dear Amy!’

‘Just like her, and like no one else, except—— Of course my father wrote him an official communication yesterday, very short; but the fact must have made it sweet enough, savage as we all were towards him, as there was no one else to be savage to, unless it might be poor Miss Morville, who is the chief loser by being of the feminine gender,’ said Charles, again braving what he was pleased to call sentimentality. ‘Well, by-and-by, my lady wants to know if any one has written to ‘poor Philip,’ as she *will* call him, and, by no means contented by hearing papa had, she sends to ask me to come to her when I came in from wheeling in the garden; and receives me with a request that I would write and tell him how well she is, and how glad, and so on. There’s a piece of work for me!’

‘Luckily you are not quite so savage as you pretend, either to him, or your poor little niece.’

‘Whew! I should not care whether she was niece or nephew but for him; at least not much, as long as she comforted Amy: but to see him at Redclyffe, and be obliged to make much of him at the same time, is more than I can very well bear; though I may as well swallow it as best I can, for she will have me do it, as well as on Laura’s account. Amy believes, you know, that he will think the inheritance a great misfortune;

but that is only a proof that she is more amiable than any one else.'

'I should think he would not rejoice.'

'Not exactly; but I have no fear that he will not console himself by thinking of the good he will do with it. I have no doubt that he was thoroughly cut up, and I could even go the length of believing that distress of mind helped to bring on the relapse; but it is some time ago. And as to his breaking his heart after the first ten minutes at finding himself what he has all his life desired to be, in a situation where the full influence of his talents may be felt,' said Charles, with a shade of imitation of his measured tones, 'why that, no one but silly little Amy would ever dream of.'

'Well, I dare say you will grow merciful as you write.'

'No, that is not the way to let my indignation ooze out at my fingers' ends. I shall begin by writing to condole with Markham. Poor man! what a state he must be in! all the more pitiable because he evidently had entirely forgotten that there could ever be a creature of the less worthy gender born to the house of Morville; so it will take him quite by surprise. What will he do, and how will he ever forgive Mrs. Ashford, who, I see in the paper, has a son whom nobody wants, as if for the express purpose of insulting Markham's feelings! Well-a-day! I should have liked to have had the sound of Sir Guy Morville still in my ears, and yet I don't know that I could have endured its being applied to a little senseless baby! And, after all, we are the gainers; for it would have been a forlorn thing to have seen Amy go off to reign queen-mother at Redclyffe,—and most notably well would she have reigned, with that clear little head. I vow 'tis a talent thrown away! However, I can't grumble. She is much happier without greatness thrust on her, and, for my own part, I have my home-sister all to myself, with no rival but that small woman—and how she will pet her!'

‘And how you will! What a spoiling uncle you will be! But now, having heard you reason yourself into philosophy, I’ll leave you to write. We were so anxious that I could not help coming. I am so glad that little one thrives! I should like to leave my love for Amy, if you’ll remember it.’

‘The rarity of such a message from you may enable me. I was lying here alone, and received the collected love of five Harpers to convey up stairs, all which I forgot; though in its transit by Arnaud and his French, it had become ‘that they made their friendships to my lady and Mrs. Edmonstone.’

Charles had not talked so like himself for months; and Mary felt that Amabel’s child, if she had disappointed some expectations, had come like a spring blossom, to cheer Hollywell, after its long winter of sorrow and anxiety. She seemed to have already been received as a messenger to comfort them for the loss, greatest of all to her, poor child, though she would never know how great. Next Mary wondered what kind of letter Charles would indite, and guessed it would be all the kinder for the outpouring he had made to her, the only person with whom he ventured to indulge in a comfortable abuse of Philip, since his good sense taught him that, ending as affairs must, it was the only wise way to make the best of it with father, mother, and Charlotte, all quite sufficiently disposed to regard Philip with aversion without his help.

Philip was at breakfast with the Henleys, on the following morning, a Sunday,—or rather, sitting at the breakfast table, when the letters were brought in. Mrs. Henley, pretending to be occupied with her own, had an eager, watchful eye on her brother, as one was placed before him. She knew Mr. Edmonstone’s writing, but was restrained from exclaiming by her involuntary deference for her brother. He flushed deep red one moment, then turned deadly pale; his hand, when first he raised it, trembled, but then be-

came firm, as if controlled by the force of his resolution. He broke the black seal, drew out the letter, paused another instant, unfolded it, glanced at it, pushed his chair from the table, and hastened to the door.

‘Tell me, tell me, Philip, what is it?’ she exclaimed, rising to follow him.

He turned round, threw the letter on the table, and with a sign that forbade her to come with him, left the room.

‘Poor fellow! how he feels it! That poor young creature!’ said she, catching up the letter for explanation.

‘Ha! No! Listen to this, Dr. Henley. Why, he must have read it wrong!’

Hollywell, March 5th.

DEAR PHILIP,—I have to announce to you that Lady Morville was safely confined this morning with a daughter. I shall be ready to send all the papers and accounts of the Redclyffe estate to any place you may appoint as soon as she is sufficiently recovered to transact business. Both she and the infant are as well as can be expected.—Yours sincerely,

C. EDMONSTONE.

‘A daughter!’ cried Dr. Henley. ‘Well, my dear, I congratulate you! It is as fine a property as any in the kingdom. We shall see him pick up strength now.’

‘I must go and find him. He surely has mistaken!’ said Margaret, hastening in search of him; but he was not to be found, and she saw him no more till she found him in the seat at church.

She hardly waited to be in the churchyard, after the service, before she said, ‘Surely you mistook the letter!’

‘No, I did not.’

‘You saw that she is doing well, and it is a girl.’

‘I——’

‘And will you not let me congratulate you?’

She was interrupted by some acquaintance; but when

she looked round he was nowhere to be seen, and she was obliged to be content with telling every one the news. One or two of her many tame gentlemen came home with her to luncheon, and she had the satisfaction of dilating on the grandeur of Redclyffe. Her brother was not in the drawing-room, but answered when she knocked at his door.

‘Luncheon is ready. Will you come down?’

‘Is any one there?’

‘Mr. Brown and Walter Maitland. Shall I send you anything, or do you like to come down?’

‘I’ll come, thank you,’ said he, thus secured from a *tête-à-tête*.

‘Had you better come? Is not your head too bad!’

‘It will not be better for staying here; I’ll come.’

She went down, telling her visitors that, since his illness, her brother always suffered so much from excitement that he was too unwell to have derived much pleasure from the tidings: and when he appeared, his air corresponded with her account, for his looks were of the gravest and sternest. He received the congratulations of the gentlemen without the shadow of a smile, and made them think him the haughtiest and most dignified landed proprietor in England.

Mrs. Henley advised strongly against his going to church, but without effect; and losing him in the crowd coming out, saw him no more till just before dinner-time. He had steeled himself to endure all that she and the doctor could inflict on him that evening, and he had a hope of persuading Amabel that it would be only doing justice to her child to let him restore her father’s inheritance, which had come to him through circumstances that could not have been foreseen. He was determined to do nothing like an act of possession of Redclyffe till he had implored her to accept the offer; and it was a great relief thus to keep it in doubt a little longer, and not absolutely feel himself profiting by Guy’s death and sitting in his seat. Not a word, however, must be

said to let his sister guess at his resolution, and he must let her torture him in the meantime. He was vexed at having been startled into betraying his suffering, and was humiliated at the thought of the change from that iron imperturbability, compounded of strength, pride, and coldness, in which he had once gloried.

Dr. Henley met him with a shake of the hand, and hearty exclamation :—

‘I congratulate you, Sir Philip Morville.’

‘No ; that is spared me,’ was his answer.

‘Hm ! The baronetcy?’

Yes,’ said Margaret, ‘I thought you knew that only goes to the direct heir of old Sir Hugh. But you must drop the ‘captain’ at least. You will sell out at once?’

He patiently endured the conversation on the extent and beauty of Redclyffe, wearing, all the time, a stern, resolute aspect, that his sister knew to betoken great unhappiness. She earnestly wished to understand him ; but at last seeing how much her conversation increased his headache, she desisted, and left him to all the repose his thoughts could give him. He was very much concerned at the tone of the note from his uncle, as if it was intended to show that all connection with the family was to be broken off. He supposed it had been concerted with some one ; with Charles, most likely,—Charles, who had judged him too truly, and with his attachment to Guy, and aversion to himself, was doubtless strengthening his father’s displeasure, all the more for this hateful wealth. And Laura? What did she feel?

Monday morning brought another letter. At first, he was struck with the dread of evil tidings of Amabel or her babe, especially when he recognised Charles’s straggling handwriting ; and, resolved not to be again betrayed, he carried it up to read in his own room before his sister had noticed it. He could hardly resolve to open it, for surely Charles would not write to him without necessity ; and what, save sorrow, could cause that necessity? He saw that his wretchedness might

be even more complete! At length he read it, and could hardly believe his own eyes as he saw cheering words, in a friendly style of interest and kindness such as he would never have expected from Charles, more especially now.

Hollywell, March 6th.

MY DEAR PHILIP,—I believe my father wrote to you in haste yesterday; but I am sure you will be anxious for further accounts, and when there is good news there is satisfaction in conveying it. I know you will be glad to hear our affairs are very prosperous; and Amy, whom I have just been visiting, is said by the authorities to be going on as well as possible. She begs me to tell you of her welfare, and to assure you that she is particularly pleased to have a daughter; or, perhaps, it will be more satisfactory to have her own words. ‘You must tell him how well I am, Charlie, and how very glad. And tell him that he must not vex himself about her being a girl, for that is my great pleasure; and I do believe, the very thing I should have chosen if I had set to work to wish.’ You know Amy never said a word but in all sincerity, so you may trust her; and I add my testimony that she is in placid spirits, and may well be glad to escape the cares of Redclyffe. My father says he desired Markham to write to you on the business matters. I hope the sea-breezes may do you good. All the party here are well; but I see little of them now, all the interest of the house is up stairs.—Your affectionate,

C. M. EDMONSTONE.

P.S. The baby is very small, but so plump and healthy, that no one attempts to be uneasy about her.

Never did letter come in better time to raise a desponding heart. Of Amabel’s forgiveness he was already certain; but that she should have made Charles his friend was a wonder beyond all others. It gave him more hope for the future than he had yet been able to entertain, and showed him that the former note was

no studied renunciation of him, but only an ebullition of Mr. Edmonstone's disappointment.

It gave him spirit enough to undertake what he had long been meditating, but without energy to set about it—an expedition to Stylehurst. Hitherto it had been his first walk on coming to St. Mildred's, but now the distance across the moor was far beyond his powers; and even that length of ride was a great enterprise. It was much further by the carriage road, and his sister never liked going there. He had never failed to visit his old home till last year, and he felt almost glad that he had not carried his thoughts, at that time, to his father's grave. It was strange that, with so many more important burdens on his mind, it had been this apparently trivial omission, this slight to Stylehurst, that, in both his illnesses, had been the most frequently recurring idea that had tormented him in his delirium. So deeply, securely fixed is the love of the home of childhood in men of his mould, in whom it is perhaps the most deeply-rooted of all affections.

Without telling his sister his intention, he hired a horse, and pursued the familiar moorland tracks. He passed South Moor Farm; it gave him too great a pang to look at it; he rode on across the hills where he used to walk with his sisters, and looked down into narrow valleys where he had often wandered with his fishing-rod, lost in musings on plans for attaining distinction, and seeing himself the greatest man of his day. Little had he then guessed the misery which would place him in the way to the coveted elevation, or how he would loathe it when it lay within his grasp.

There were the trees round the vicarage, the church spire, the cottages, whose old rough aspect he knew so well, the whole scene once 'redolent of joy and youth;' but how unable to breathe on him a second spring! He put up his horse at the village inn, and went to make his first call on Susan, the old clerk's wife, and one of the persons in all the world who loved him best.

He knocked, opened the door, and saw her, startled from her tea-drinking, looking at him as a stranger.

‘Bless us ! It beant never Master Philip !’ she exclaimed, her head shaking very fast, as she recognised his voice. ‘Why, sir, what a turn you give me ! How bad you be looking, to be sure !’

He sat down and talked with her, with feelings of comfort. Tidings of Sir Guy’s death had reached the old woman, and she was much grieved for the nice, cheerful-spoken young gentleman, whom she well remembered ; for she, like almost every one who had ever had any intercourse with him, had an impression left of him, as of something winning, engaging, brightening, like a sunbeam. It was a refreshment to meet with one who would lament him for his own sake, and had no congratulations for Philip himself ; and the ‘Sure, sure, it must have been very bad for you,’ with which old Susan heard of the circumstances, carried more of the comfort of genuine sympathy than all his sister’s attempts at condolence.

She told him how often Sir Guy had been at Stylehurst, how he had talked to her about the archdeacon ; and especially she remembered his helping her husband one day when he found him trimming the ash over the archdeacon’s grave. He used to come very often to church there, more in the latter part of his stay ; there was one Sunday—it was the one before Michaelmas—he was there all day, walking in the churchyard, and sitting in the porch between services.

‘The Sunday before Michaelmas !’ thought Philip, the very time when he had been most earnest in driving his uncle to persecute, and delighting himself in having triumphed over Guy at last, and obtained tangible demonstration of his own foresight, and his cousin’s vindictive spirit. What had he been throwing away ? Where had, in truth, been the hostile spirit ?

He took the key of the church, and walked thither alone, standing for several minutes by the three graves, with a sensation as if his father was demanding of him

an account of the boy he had watched, and brought to his ancestral home, and cared for through his orphaned childhood. But for the prayer-book, the pledge that there had been peace at the last, how could he have borne it?

Here was the paved path he had trodden in early childhood, holding his mother's hand, where, at each recurring vacation during his school days, he had walked between his admiring sisters, in the consciousness that he was the pride of his family and of all the parish. Of his family? Did he not remember his return home for the last time before that when he was summoned thither by his father's death? He had come with a whole freight of prizes, and letters full of praises; and as he stood, in expectation of the expression of delighted satisfaction, his father laid his hand on his trophy, the pile of books, saying, gravely—'All this would I give, Philip, for one evidence of humility of mind.'

It had been his father's one reproof. He had thought it unjust and unreasonable, and turned away impatiently to be caressed and admired by Margaret. His real feelings had been told to her, because she flattered them and shared them; he had been reserved and guarded with the father who would have perceived and repressed that ambition and the self-sufficiency which he himself had never known to exist, nor regarded as aught but sober truth. It had been his bane, that he had been always too sensible to betray outwardly his self-conceit, in any form that could lead to its being noticed.

He opened the church door, closed it behind him, and locked himself in.

He came up to the communion rail, where he had knelt for the first time twelve years ago, confident in himself, and unconscious of the fears with which his father's voice was trembling in the intensity of his prayer for one in whom there was no tangible evil, and whom others thought a pattern of all that could be desired by the fondest hopes.

He knelt down, with bowed head, and hands clasped. Assuredly, if his father could have beheld him then, it would have been with rejoicing. He would not have sorrowed that that robust frame was wasted, and great strength brought low; that the noble features were worn, the healthful cheek pale, and the powerful intellect clouded and weakened; he would hardly have mourned for the cruel grief and suffering, such would have been his joy that the humble, penitent, obedient heart had been won at last. Above all, he would have rejoiced that the words that most soothed that wounded spirit were,—‘A broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.’

There was solace in that solemn silence; the throbs of head and heart were stilled in the calm around. It was as if the influences of the prayers breathed for him by his father, and the forgiveness and loving spirit there won by Guy, had been waiting for him there till he came to take them up, for thenceforth the bitterest of his despair was over, and he could receive each token of Amabel’s forgiveness, not as heaped coals of fire, but as an earnest of forgiveness sealed in heaven.

The worst was over, and though he still had much to suffer, he was becoming open to receive comfort; the blank dark remorse in which he had been living began to lighten, and the tone of his mind to return.

He spoke more cheerfully to Susan when he restored the key; but she had been so shocked at his appearance, that when, the next day, a report reached her that Mr. Philip was now a grand gentleman, and very rich, she answered,—

‘Well, if it be so, I am glad of it, but he said never a word of it to me, and it is my belief he would give all the money as ever was coined, to have the poor young gentleman back again. Depend upon it, he hates the very sound of it.’

At the cost of several sheets of paper, Philip at length completed a letter to Mr. Edmonstone, which, when he had sent it, made his suspense more painful.

St. Mildred's, March 12th.

MY DEAR MR. EDMONSTONE, — It is with a full sense of the unfitness of intruding such a subject upon you in the present state of the family, that I again address you on the same topic as that on which I wrote to you from Italy, at the first moment at which I have felt it possible to ask your attention. I was then too ill to be able to express my contrition for all that has passed ; in fact, I doubt whether it was even then so deep as at present, since every succeeding week has but added to my sense of the impropriety of my conduct, and my earnest desire for pardon. I can hardly venture at such a time to ask anything further, but I must add that my sentiments towards your daughter are unaltered, and can never cease but with my life ; and though I know I have rendered myself unworthy of her, and my health, both mental and bodily, is far from being re-established, I cannot help laying my feelings before you, and entreating that you will put an end to the suspense which has endured for so many months, by telling me to hope that I have not for ever forfeited your consent to my attachment. At least, I trust to your kindness for telling me on what terms I am for the present to stand with your family. I am glad to hear such favourable reports of Lady Morville, and with all my heart I thank Charles for his letter.

Yours ever affectionately,

PH. MORVILLE.

He ardently watched for a reply. He could not endure the idea of receiving it where Margaret's eyes could scan the emotion he could now only conceal by a visible rigidity of demeanour, and he daily went himself to the post-office, but in vain. He received nothing but business letters, and among them one from Markham, with as much defiance and dislike in its style as could be shown in a perfectly formal, proper letter. Till he had referred to Lady Morville, he would not make any demonstration towards Redclyffe, and evaded

all his sister's questions as to what he was doing about it, and when he should take measures for leaving the army, or obtaining a renewal of the baronetcy.

Anxiety made him look daily more wretchedly haggard; the doctor was at fault, Mrs. Henley looked sagacious, while his manner became so dry and repellent that visitors went away moralizing on the absurdity of *nouveaux riches* taking so much state on them.

He wondered how soon he might venture to write to Amabel, on whom alone he could depend; but he felt it a sort of profanity to disturb her.

He had nearly given up his visits to the post in despair, when one morning he beheld what never failed to bring some soothing influence, namely, the fair pointed characters he had not dared to hope for.

He walked quickly into the promenade, sat down, and read:—

Hollywell, March 22nd.

MY DEAR PHILIP,—Papa does not answer your letter, because he says speaking is better than writing, and we hope you are well enough to come to us before Sunday week. I hope to take our dear little girl to be christened on that day, and I want you to be so kind as to be her godfather. I ask it of you, not only in my own name, but in her father's, for I am sure it is what he would choose. Her aunt Laura and Mary Ross are to be her godmothers. I hope you will not think me very foolish and fanciful for naming her Mary Verena, in remembrance of our old readings of *Sintram*. She is a very healthy, quiet creature, and I am getting on very well. I am writing from the dressing-room, and I expect to be down stairs in a few days. If you do not dislike it very much, could you be so kind as to call upon Miss Wellwood, and pay little Marianne Dixon's quarter for me? It is £10, and it will save trouble if you would do it; besides that, I should like to hear of her and the little girl. I am sorry to hear you are not better,—perhaps coming here

may do you good.—Four o'clock. I have been keeping my letter in hopes of persuading papa to put in a note, but he says he had rather send a message that 'he is quite ready to forgive and forget, and it will be best to talk it over when you come.'

Your affectionate cousin,

A. F. MORVILLE.

It was well he was not under his sister's eye, for he could not read this letter calmly, and he was obliged to take several turns along the walk before he could recover his composure enough to appear in the breakfast-room, where he found his sister alone, dealing her letters into separate packets of important and unimportant.

'Good morning, Philip. Dr. Henley is obliged to go to Bramshaw this morning, and has had an early breakfast. Have you been out?'

'Yes, it is very fine—I mean it will be—the haze is clearing.'

Margaret saw that he was unusually agitated, and not by grief; applied herself to tea-making, and hoped his walk had given him an appetite; but there seemed little chance of this, so long were his pauses between each morsel, and so often did he lean back in his chair.

'I am going to leave you on—on Friday,' he said, at length, abruptly.

'Oh, are you going to Redclyffe?'

'No; to Hollywell. Lady Morville wishes me to be her little girl's sponsor; I shall go to London on Friday, and on, the next day.'

'I am glad they have asked you. Does she write herself? Is she pretty well?'

'Yes; she is to go down stairs in a day or two.'

'I am rejoiced that she is recovering so well. Do you know whether she is in tolerable spirits?'

'She writes cheerfully.'

'How many years is it since I saw her? She was quite a child; but very sweet-tempered and attentive

to poor Charles,' said Mrs. Henley, feeling most amiably disposed towards her future sister-in-law.

'Just so. Her gentleness and sweet temper were always beautiful; and she has shown herself under her trials what it would be presumptuous to praise.'

Margaret had no doubt now, and thought he was ready for more open sympathy.

'You must let me congratulate you now on this unexpected dawn of hope, after your long trial, my dear brother. It is a sort of unconscious encouragement you could hardly hope for.'

'I did not know you knew anything of it,' said Philip.

'Ah! my dear brother, you betrayed yourself. You need not be disconcerted; only a sister could see the real cause of your want of spirits. Your manner at each mention of her, your anxiety, coupled with your resolute avoidance of her——'

'Of whom? Do you know what you are talking of, sister?' said Philip, sternly.

'Of Amabel, of course.'

Philip rose, perfectly awful in his height and indignation.

'Sister!' he said—paused, and began again. 'I have been attached to Laura Edmonstone for years past, and Lady Morville knows it.'

'To Laura!' cried Mrs. Henley, in amaze. 'Are you engaged?' and as he was hardly prepared to answer, she continued, 'If you have not gone too far to recede, only consider before you take any rash step. You come into this property without ready money, you will find endless claims, and if you marry at once and without fortune, you will never be clear from difficulties.'

'I have considered,' he replied, with cold loftiness that would have silenced any one, not of the same determined mould.

'You are positively committed, then!' she said, much vexed. 'Oh, Philip! I did not think you would have married for mere beauty.'

‘I can hear no more discussion on this point,’ answered Philip, in the serious, calm tone that showed so much power over himself and every one else.

It put Margaret to silence, though she was excessively disappointed to find him thus involved just at his outset, when he might have married so much more advantageously. She was sorry, too, that she had shown her opinion so plainly, since it was to be, and hurt his feelings just as he seemed to be thawing. She would fain have learnt more; but he was completely shut up within himself, and never opened again to her. She had never before so grated on every delicate feeling in his mind; and he only remained at her house because, in his present state of health, he hardly knew where to bestow himself till it was time for him to go to Hollywell.

He went to call on Miss Wellwood, to whom his name was no slight recommendation, and she met him eagerly, asking after Lady Morville, who, she said, had twice written to her most kindly about little Marianne.

It was a very pleasant visit, and a great relief. He looked at the plans, heard the fresh arrangements, admired, was interested, and took pleasure in having something to tell Amabel. He asked for Marianne, and heard that she was one of the best of children—amiable, well-disposed, only almost too sensitive. Miss Wellwood said it was remarkable how deep an impression Sir Guy had made upon her, and how affectionately she remembered his kindness; and her distress at hearing of his death had been far beyond what such a child could have been supposed to feel, both in violence and in duration.

Philip asked to see her, knowing it would please Amabel, and in she came—a long, thin, nine-year old child, just grown into the encumbering shyness, that is by no means one of the graces of *la vieillesse de l'enfance*.

He wished to be kind and encouraging; but melancholy, added to his natural stateliness, made him very

formidable ; and poor Marianne was capable of nothing beyond 'yes' or 'no.'

He told her he was going to see Lady Morville and her little girl, whereat she eagerly raised her eyes, then shrank in affright at anything so tall, and so unlike Sir Guy. He said the baby was to be christened next Sunday, and Miss Wellwood helped him out by asking the name.

Mary, he said, for he was 'by no means inclined to explain the Verena, though he knew not half what it conveyed to Amabel.

Lastly, he asked if Marianne had any message ; when she hung down her head, and whispered to Miss Wellwood, what proved to be 'My love to dear little cousin Mary.'

He promised to deliver it, and departed, wishing he could more easily unbend.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Blest, though every tear that falls
Doth in its silence of past sorrow tell,
And makes a meeting seem most like a dear farewell.

WORDSWORTH.

ON Saturday afternoon, about half-past five, Philip Morville found himself driving up to the well-known front-door of Hollywell. At the door he heard that every one was out excepting Lady Morville, who never came down till the evening, save for a drive in the carriage.

He entered the drawing-room, and gazed on the scene where he had spent so many happy hours, only darkened by that one evil spot, that had grown till it not only poisoned his own mind, but cast a gloom over that bright home.

All was as usual. Charles's sofa, little table, books, and inkstand, the work-boxes on the table, the newspaper in Mr. Edmonstone's old folds. Only the piano was closed, and an accumulation of books on the hinge told how long it had been so; and the plants in the bay window were brown and dry, not as when they were Amabel's cherished nurselings. He remembered Amabel's laughing face and abundant curls, when she carried in the camellia, and thought how little he guessed then that he should be the destroyer of the happiness of her young life. How should he meet her—a widow in her father's house—or look at her father-

less child? He wondered how he had borne to come thither at all, and shrank at the thought that this very evening, in a few hours, he must see her.

The outer door opened, there was a soft step, and Amabel stood before him, pale, quiet, and with a smile of welcome. Her bands of hair looked glossy under her widow's cap, and the deep black of her dress was relieved by the white robes of the babe that lay on her arm. She held out her hand, and he pressed it in silence.

'I thought you would like just to see baby,' said she, in a voice something like apology.

He held out his arms to take it, for which Amy was by no means prepared. She was not quite happy even in trusting it in her sister's arms, and she supposed he had never before touched an infant. But that was all nonsense, and she would not vex him with showing any reluctance; so she laid the little one on his arm, and saw his great hand holding it most carefully; but the next moment he turned abruptly from her. Poor silly little Amy, her heart beat not a little till he turned back, restored the babe, and while he walked hastily to the window, she saw that two large tear-drops had fallen on the white folds of its mantle. She did not speak; she guessed how much he must feel in thus holding Guy's child, and, besides, her own tears would now flow so easily that she must be on her guard. She sat down, settled the little one on her knee, and gave him time to recover himself.

Presently he came and stood by her, saying, in a most decided tone, 'Amabel, you must let me do this child justice.'

She looked up, wondering what he could mean.

'I will not delay in taking steps for restoring her inheritance,' said he, hoping by determination to overpower Amabel, and make her believe it a settled and a right thing.

'O Philip, you are not thinking of that!'

‘It is to be done.’

‘You would not be so unkind to this poor little girl,’ said Amy, with a persuasive smile, partaking of her old playfulness; adding, very much in earnest, ‘Pray put it out of your head directly, for it would be very wrong.’

The nurse knocked at the door to fetch the baby, as Amabel had desired. When this interruption was over, Philip came and sat down opposite to her, and began with his most decided manner:—

‘You must listen to me, Amy, and not allow any scruples to prevent you from permitting your child to be restored to her just rights. You must see that the estate has come to me by circumstances such that no honest man could be justified in retaining it. The entail was made to exclude females, only because of the old Lady Granard. It is your duty to consent.’

‘The property has always gone in the male line,’ replied Amabel.

‘There never was such a state of things. Old Sir Guy could never have thought of entailing it away from his own descendant on a distant cousin. It would be wrong of me to profit by these unforeseen contingencies, and you ought not, in justice to your child, to object.’

He spoke so forcibly and decidedly that he thought he must have prevailed. But not one whit convinced, Amabel answered, in her own gentle voice, but beginning with a business-like argument:—‘Such a possibility was contemplated. It was all provided for in the marriage settlements. Indeed, I am afraid that, as it is, she will be a great deal too rich. Besides, Philip, I am sure this is exactly what Guy would have chosen,’ and the tears rose in her eyes. ‘The first thing that came into my head when she was born, was, that it was just what he wished, that I should have her for myself, and that you should take care of Redclyffe. I am certain now that he hoped it would be so. I know—

indeed I do—that he took great pleasure in thinking of its being in your hands, and of your going on with all he began. You can't have forgotten how much he left in your charge? If you were to give it up, it would be against his desire; and with that knowledge, how could I suffer it? Then think what a misfortune to her, poor little thing, to be a great heiress, and how very bad for Redclyffe to have no better a manager than me! Oh, Philip, can you not see it is best as it is, and just as he wished?’

He almost groaned—‘If you could guess what a burden it is.’

‘Ah! but you must carry it, not throw it down on such hands as mine and that tiny baby’s,’ said she, smiling.

‘It would have been the same if it had been a boy.’

‘Yes; then I must have done the best I could, and there would have been an end to look to, but I am so glad to be spared. And you are so fit for it, and will make it turn to so much use to every one.’

‘I don’t feel as if I should ever be of use to any one,’ said Philip, in a tone of complete dejection.

‘Your head is aching,’ said she, kindly.

‘It always does, more or less,’ replied he, resting it on his hand.

‘I am so sorry. Has it been so ever since you were ill? But you are better? You look better than when I saw you last.’

‘I am better on the whole, but I doubt whether I shall ever be as strong as I used to be. That ought to make me hesitate, even if—’ then came a pause, while he put his hand over his face, and seemed struggling with irrepressible emotion; and after all he was obliged to take two walks to the window before he could recover composure, and could ask in a voice which he tried to make calm and steady, though his face was deeply flushed—‘Amy, how is Laura?’

‘She is very well,’ answered Amabel. ‘Only you

must not be taken by surprise if you see her looking thinner.'

'And she has trusted—she has endured through all?' said he, with inquiring earnestness.

'O yes!'

'And they—your father and mother—can forgive?'

'They do—they have. But, Philip, it was one of the things I came down to say to you. I don't think you must expect papa to begin about it himself. You know he does not like awkwardness, though he will be very glad when once it is done, and ready to meet you half way.' He did not answer, and after a silence Amabel added, 'Laura is out of doors. She and Charlotte take very long walks.'

'And is she really strong and well, or is it that excited overdoing of employment that I first set her upon?' he asked, anxiously.

'She is perfectly well, and to be busy has been a great help to her,' said Amabel. 'It was a great comfort that we did not know how ill you had been at Corfu, till the worst was over. Eveleen only mentioned it when you were better. I was very anxious, for I had some fears from the note that you sent by Arnaud. I am very glad to see you safe here, for I have felt all along that we forsook you; but I could not help it.'

'I am very glad you did not stay. The worst of all would have been that you should have run any risk.'

'There is the carriage,' said Amy. 'Mamma and Charlie have been to Broadstone. They thought they might meet you by the late train.'

Philip's colour rose. He stood up—sat down; then rising once more, leant on the mantel-piece, scarcely knowing how to face either of them—his aunt, with her well-merited displeasure, and Charles, who, when he parted with him had accused him so justly—Charles, who had seen through him and had been treated with scorn.

A few moments, and Charles came in, leaning on his mother. They both shook hands, exclaimed at finding Amabel down stairs, and Mrs. Edmonstone asked after Philip's health in her would-be cordial manner. The two ladies then went up stairs together, and thus ended that conference, in which both parties had shown rare magnanimity, of which they were perfectly unconscious; and perhaps the most remarkable part of all was that Philip quietly gave up the great renunciation and so-called sacrifice, with which he had been feeding his hopes, at the simple bidding of the gentle-spoken Amabel—not even telling her that he resigned it. He kept the possessions which he abhorred, and gave up the renunciation he had longed to make; and in this lay the true sacrifice, the greater because the world would think him the gainer.

When the mother and daughter were gone, the cousins were silent, Philip resting his elbow on the mantelshelf and his head on his hand, and Charles sitting at the end of the sofa, warming first one hand, then the other, while he looked up to the altered face, and perceived in it grief and humiliation almost as plainly as illness. His keen eyes read that the sorrow was indeed more deeply rooted than he had hitherto believed, and that Amabel's pity had not been wasted; and he was also struck by the change from the great personal strength that used to make nothing of lifting his whole weight.

'I am sorry to see you so pulled down,' said he. 'We must try if we can doctor you better than they did at St. Mildred's. Are you getting on, do you think?'

He had hardly ever spoken to Philip, so entirely without either bitterness or sarcasm, and his manner hardly seemed like that of the same person.

'Thank you, I am growing stronger; but as long as I cannot get rid of this headache, I am good for nothing.'

'You have had a long spell of illness indeed,' said

Charles. 'You can't expect to shake off two fevers in no time. Now all the anxiety is over, you will brighten like this house.'

'But tell me, what is thought of Amabel? Is she as well as she ought to be?'

'Yes, quite, they say—has recovered her strength very fast, and is in just the right spirits. She was churched yesterday, and was not the worse for it. It was a trial, for she had not been to East-hill since—since last May.'

'It is a blessing, indeed,' said Philip earnestly.

'She has been so very happy with the baby,' said Charles. 'You hear what its name is to be?'

'Yes, she told me in her letter.'

'To avoid having to tell you here, I suppose. Mary is for common wear, Verena for ourselves.' She asked if it would be too foolish to give such a name, and mamma said the only question was, whether she would like indifferent people to ask the reason of it.'

Philip lapsed into thought, and presently said, abruptly, 'When last we parted you told me I was malignant. You were right.'

'Shake hands!' was all Charles's reply, and no more was said till Charles rose, saying it was time to dress. Philip was about to help him, but he answered, 'No, thank you, I am above trusting to anything but my own crutches now; I am proud to show you what feats I can perform.'

Charles certainly did get on with less difficulty than heretofore, but it was more because he wanted to spare Philip fatigue than because he disdained assistance, that he chose to go alone. Moreover, he did what he had never done for any one before—he actually hopped the whole length of the passage, beyond his own door, to do the honours of Philip's room, and took a degree of pains for his comfort that seemed too marvellous to be true in one who had hitherto only lived to be attended on.

By the time he had settled Philip, the rest of the party had come home, and he found himself wanted in

the dressing-room to help his mother to encourage his father to enter on the conversation with Philip in the evening, for poor Mr. Edmonstone was in such a worry and perplexity, that the whole space till the dinner-bell rang was insufficient to console him in. Laura, meanwhile, was with Amabel, who was trying to cheer her fluttering spirits and nerves, which, after having been so long harassed, gave way entirely at the moment of meeting Philip again. How would he regard her after her weakness in betraying him for want of self-command? Might he not be wishing to be free of one who had so disappointed him, and only persisting in the engagement from a sense of honour? The confidence in his affection, which had hitherto sustained her, was failing; and not all Amabel could say would reassure her. No one could judge of him but herself; his words were so cautious, and he had so much command over himself, that nobody could guess. Of course he felt bound to her; but if she saw one trace of his being only influenced by honour and pity, she would release him, and he should never see the struggle.

She had worked herself up into almost a certainty that so it would be, and Amabel was afraid she would not be fit to go down to dinner; but the sound of the bell, and the necessity of moving, seemed to restore the habit of external composure in a moment. She settled her countenance, and left the room.

Charlotte, meantime, had been dressing alone, and raging against Philip, declaring she could never bear to speak to him, and that if she was Amy she would never have chosen him for a godfather. And to think of his marrying just like a good hero in a book, and living very happy ever after! To be sure, she was sorry for poor Laura; but it was all very wrong, and now they would be rewarded! How could Charlie be so provoking as to talk about his sorrow! She hoped he was sorry; and as to his illness, it served him right.

All this Charlotte communicated to Bustle; but Bustle had heard some mysterious noise, and insisted

on going to investigate the cause; and Charlotte, finding her own domain dark and cold, and private conferences going on in Amabel's apartment and the dressing-room, was fain to follow him down stairs, as soon as her toilet was complete, only hoping Philip would keep out of the way.

But, behold, there he was, and even Bustle was propitiated, for she found him, his nose on Philip's knee, looking up in his face, and wagging his tail, while Philip stroked and patted him, and could hardly bear the appealing expression of the eyes, that, always wistful, now seemed to every one to be looking for his master.

To see this attention to Bustle won Charlotte over in a moment. 'How are you, Philip? Good dog, dear old Bustle!' came in a breath, and they were both making much of the dog, when she amicably asked if he had seen the baby, and became eager in telling about the christening.

The dinner-bell brought every one down but Amabel. The trembling hands of Philip and Laura met for a moment, and they were in the dining-room.

Diligently and dutifully did Charles and Mrs. Edmonstone keep up the conversation; the latter about her shopping, the former about the acquaintances who had come to speak to him as he sat in the carriage. As soon as possible, Mrs. Edmonstone left the dining-room, then Laura flew up again to the dressing-room, sank down on a footstool by Amabel's side, and exclaiming, 'O Amy, he is looking so ill!' burst into a flood of tears.

The change had been a shock for which Laura had not been prepared. Amy, who had seen him look so much worse, had not thought of it, and it overcame Laura more than all her anxieties lest his love should be forfeited. She sobbed inconsolably over the alteration; and it was long before Amabel could get her to hear that his face was much less thin now, and that he was altogether much stronger; it was fatigue

and anxiety to-night, and to-morrow he would be better. Laura proceeded to brood over her belief that his altered demeanour, his settled melancholy, his not seeking her eye, his cold shake of the hand, all arose from the diminution of his love, and his dislike to be encumbered with a weak, foolish wife, with whom he had entangled himself when he deemed her worthy of him. She dwelt on all this in silence, as she sat at her sister's feet, and Amy left her to think, only now and then giving some caress to her hair or cheek, and at each touch the desolate waste of life that poor Laura was unfolding before herself was rendered less dreary by the thought, 'I have my sister still, and she knows sorrow too.' Then she half envied Amy, who had lost her dearest by death, and held his heart fast to the last; not, like herself, doomed to see the love decay for which she had endured so long—decay at the very moment when the suspense was over.

Laura might justly have envied Amabel, though for another reason; it was because in her cup there was no poison of her own infusing.

There she stayed till Charlotte came to summon her to tea, saying the gentlemen, except Charles, were still in the dining-room.

They had remained sitting over the fire for a considerable space, waiting for each other to begin, Mr. Edmonstone irresolute, Philip striving to master his feelings, and to prevent increasing pain and confusion from making him forget what he intended to say. At last, Mr. Edmonstone started up, pulled out his keys, took a candle, and said, 'Come to the study—I'll give you the Redclyffe papers.'

'Thank you,' said Philip, also rising, but only because he could not sit while his uncle stood. 'Not to-night, if you please. I could not attend to them.'

'What, your head? Eh?'

'Partly. Besides, there is another subject on which I hope you will set me at rest before I can enter on any other.'

‘Yes—yes—I know,’ said Mr. Edmonstone, moving uneasily.

‘I am perfectly conscious how deeply I have offended.’

Mr. Edmonstone could not endure the apology. ‘Well, well,’ he broke in, nervously, ‘I know all that, and it can’t be helped. Say no more about it. Young people will be foolish, and I’ve been young and in love myself.’

That Captain Morville should live to be thankful for being forgiven, in consideration of Mr. Edmonstone’s having been young!

‘May I then consider myself as pardoned, and as having obtained your sanction?’

‘Yes, yes, yes; and I hope it will cheer poor Laura up again a little. Four years has it gone on? Constancy, indeed! and it is time it should be rewarded. We little thought what you were up to, so grave and demure as you both were. So you won’t have the papers to-night? I can’t say you do look fit for business. Perhaps Laura may suit you better—eh, Philip?’

Love-making was such a charming sight to Mr. Edmonstone, that having once begun to look on Philip and Laura as a pair of lovers, he could not help being delighted, and forgetting, as well as forgiving, all that had been wrong.

They did not, however, exactly answer his ideas; Laura did not once look up, and Philip, instead of going boldly to take the place next her, sat down, holding his hand to his forehead, as if too much overpowered by indisposition to think of anything else. Such was in great measure the case; he was very much fatigued with the journey, and these different agitating scenes had increased the pain in his head to a violent degree; besides which, feeling that his aunt still regarded him as she did at Recoara, he could not bear to make any demonstration towards Laura before her; lest she might think it a sort of triumphant disregard of her just displeasure.

Poor Laura saw in it both severe suffering and dis-

like to her, and the more she understood from her father's manner what had passed in the other room, the more she honoured him for the sacrifice he was making of himself.

Mrs. Edmonstone waited on the headache with painful attention, but they all felt that the only thing to be done for the two poor things was to let them come to an explanation; so Charlotte was sent to bed, her mother went up to Amy, Charles carried off his father to the study, and they found themselves alone.

Laura held down her face, and struggled to make her palpitating heart and dry tongue suffer her to begin the words to which she had wound herself up. Philip raised his hand from his eyes as the door shut, then rose up, and fixed them on Laura. She too looked up, as if to begin; their eyes met, and they understood all. He stepped towards her, and held out his hands. The next moment both hers were clasped in his—he had bent down and kissed her brow.

No words of explanation passed between them. Laura knew he was her own, and needed no assurance that her misgivings had been vain. There was a start of extreme joy, such as she had known twice before, but it could be only for a moment while he looked so wretchedly unwell. It did but give her the right to attend to him. The first thing she said was to beg him to lie down on the sofa; her only care was to make him comfortable with cushions, and he was too entirely worn out to say anything he had intended, capable only of giving himself up to the repose of knowing her entirely his own, and of having her to take care of him. There he lay on the sofa, with his eyes shut, and Laura's hand in his, while she sat beside him, neither of them speaking; and, excepting that she withdrew her hand, neither moved when the others returned.

Mrs. Edmonstone compassionated him, and showed a great deal of solicitude about him, trying hard to regard him as she used to do, yet unable to bring back

the feeling, and therefore, do what she would, failing to wear its semblance.

Laura, sad, anxious, and restless, had no relief till she went to wish her sister good night. Amabel, who was already in bed, stretched out her hand with a sweet look, beaming with affection and congratulation.

‘You don’t want to be convinced now that all is right!’ said she.

‘His head is so dreadfully bad!’ said Laura.

‘Ah! it will get better now his mind is at rest.’

‘If it will but do so!’

‘And you know you must be happy to-morrow, because of baby.’

‘My dear,’ said Mrs. Edmonstone, coming in, ‘I am sorry to prevent your talk, but Amy must not be kept awake. She must keep her strength for to-morrow.’

‘Good night, then, dear, dear Laura. I am so glad your trouble is over, and you have him again!’ whispered Amabel with her parting kiss; and Laura went away, better able to hope, to pray, and to rest, than she could have thought possible when she left the drawing-room.

‘Poor dear Laura!’ said Mrs. Edmonstone, sighing; ‘I hope he will soon be better.’

‘Has it been very uncomfortable?’

‘I can’t say much for it, my dear. He was suffering terribly with his head, so that I should have been quite alarmed if he had not said it was apt to get worse in the evening; and she, poor thing, was only watching him. However, it is a comfort to have matters settled, and papa and Charlie are well pleased with him. But I must not keep you awake after driving Laura away. You are not over-tired to-night, I hope, my dear?’

‘Oh! no; only sleepy. Good night, dearest mamma.’

‘Good-night, my own Amy;’ then as Amy put back the coverings to show the little face nestled to sleep on her bosom, ‘good-night, you little darling! don’t disturb your mamma. How comfortable you look! Good-night, my dearest!’

Mrs. Edmonstone looked for a moment, while trying to check the tears that came at the thought of the night, one brief year ago, when she left Amy sleeping in the light of the Easter moon. Yet the sense of peace and serenity that had then given especial loveliness to the maiden's chamber on that night, was there still with the young widow. It was dim lamp-light now that beamed on the portrait of her husband, casting on it the shade of the little wooden cross in front, while she was shaded by the white curtain drawn from her bed, round the infant's little cot, so as to shut them both into the quiet twilight, where she lay with an expression of countenance that, though it was not sorrow, made Mrs. Edmonstone more ready to weep than if it had been; so with her last good-night, she left her.

And Amabel always liked to be shut in by herself, dearly as she loved them all, and mamma especially; there was always something pleasant in being able to return to her own world, to rest in the thoughts of her husband, and in the possession of the little unconscious creature that had come to inhabit that inner world of hers, the creature that was only his and hers.

She had from the first always felt herself less lonely when quite alone, before with his papers, and now with his child; and could Mrs. Edmonstone have seen her face, she would have wept and wondered more, as Amy fondled and hushed her babe, whispering to it fond words which she could never have uttered in the presence of any one who could understand them, and which had much of her extreme youthfulness in them. Not one was so often repeated or so endearing as 'Guy's baby! Guy's own dear little girl!' It did not mean half so much when she called it her baby; and she loved to tell the little one that her father had been the best and the dearest, but he was gone away, and would she be contented to be loving and good with only her mother to take care of her, and tell her, as

well as she could, what a father hers was, when she was old enough to know about him?

To-night, Amy told her much in that soft, solemn, murmuring tone, about what was to befall her to-morrow, and the great blessings to be given to her, and how the poor little fatherless one would be embraced in the arms of His mercy, and received by her great Father in heaven:—‘Ay, and brought nearer to your own papa, and know him in some inner way, and he will know his little child then, for you will be as good and pure and bright as he, and you will belong to the great communion of saints to-morrow, you precious one, and be so much nearer to him as you will be so much better than I. Oh! baby, if we can but both endure to the end!’

With such half-uttered words, Amabel Morville slept the night before her babe’s christening.

CHAPTER XIX.

A stranger's roof to hold thy head,
A stranger's foot thy grave to tread ;
Desert and rock, and Alp and sea,
Spreading between thy home and thee.

SEWELL.

MARY ROSS was eager for the first report from Hollywell the next morning, and had some difficulty in keeping her attention fixed on her class at school. Laura and Charlotte came in together in due time, and satisfied her so far as to tell her that Amy was very well.

‘Is Captain Morville come?’ thought Mary. ‘No, I cannot guess by Laura’s impassive face. Never mind, Charles will tell me all between services.’

The first thing she saw on coming out of school was the pony-carriage, with Charles and Captain Morville himself. Charlotte, who was all excitement, had time to say, while her sister was out of hearing,—

‘It is all made up now, Mary, and I really am very sorry for Philip.’

It was fortunate that Mary understood the amiable meaning this speech was intended to convey, and she began to enter into its grounds in the short conference after church, when she saw the alteration in the whole expression of countenance.

‘Yes,’ said Charles, who as usual remained at the vicarage between the two services, and who perceived what passed in her mind, ‘if it is any satisfaction to you to have a good opinion of your fellow-sponsor, I assure you that I am converted to Amy’s opinion. I

do believe the black dog is off his back for good and all.'

'I never saw any one more changed,' said Mary.

'Regularly tamed,' said Charles. 'He is something more like his old self to-day than last night, and yet not much. He was perfectly overpowered then—so knocked up that there was no judging of him. To-day he has all his sedateness and scrupulous attention, but all like a shadow of former times—not a morsel of sententiousness, and seeming positively grateful to be treated in the old fashion.'

'He looks very thin and pale. Do you think him recovered?'

'A good way from it,' said Charles. 'He is pretty well to-day, comparatively, though that obstinate headache hangs about him. If this change last longer than that and his white looks, I shall not even grudge him the sponsorship Amy owed me.'

'Very magnanimous!' said Mary. 'Poor Laura! I am glad her suspense is over. I wondered to see her at school.'

'They are very sad and sober lovers, and it is the best way of not making themselves unbearable, considering—Well, that was a different matter—How little we should have believed it, if any one had told us last year what would be the state of affairs to-day. By-the-bye, Amy's godson is christened to-day.'

'Who?'

'Didn't you hear that the Ashfords managed to get Amy asked if she would dislike their calling their boy by that name we shall never hear again, and she was very much pleased, and made offer in her own pretty way to be godmother. I wonder how Markham endures it? I believe he is nearly crazy. He wrote me word he should certainly have given up all concern with Redclyffe, but for the especial desire of—— What a state of mind he will be in, when he remembers how he has been abusing the captain to me!'

The afternoon was fresh and clear, and there was a

spring brightness in the sunshine that Amabel took as a greeting to her little maiden, as she was carried along the churchyard path. Many an eye was bent on the mother and child, especially on the slight form unseen since she had last walked down the aisle, her arm linked in her bridegroom's.

'Little Amy Edmonstone,' as they had scarcely learnt to cease from calling her before she was among them again, the widowed Lady Morville; and with those kind looks of compassion for her, were joined many affectionate mourning thoughts of the young husband and father, lying far away in his foreign grave and endeared by kindly remembrances to almost all present. There was much of pity for his unconscious infant, and tears were shed at the thought of what the wife must be suffering; but if the face could have been seen beneath the thick crape folds of her veil, it would have shown no tears—only a sweet, calm look of peace, and almost gladness.

The babe was on her knees when the time for the christening came; she was awake, and now and then making a little sound, and as she was quieter with her than any one else, Amabel thought she might herself carry her to the font.

It was deep, grave happiness to stand there, with her child in her arms, and with an undefined sense that she was not alone, as if in some manner her husband was present with her; praying with her prayers, and joining in offering up their treasure; when the babe was received into Mr. Ross's arms, and Amy, putting back her veil, gazed up with a wistful but serene look.

'To her life's end!' Therewith came a vision of the sunrise at Recoara, and the more glorious dawn that had shone in Guy's dying smile, and Amabel knew what would be her best prayer for his little Mary Verena, as she took her back, the drops glistening on her brow, her eyes open, and arms outspread. It was at that moment that Amabel was first thrilled with a look in her child

that was like its father. She had earnestly and often sought a resemblance without being able honestly to own that she perceived any; but now, though she knew not in what it consisted, there was something in that baby face that recalled him more vividly than picture or memory.

‘Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.’

Those words seemed to come from her own heart. She had brought Guy's daughter to be baptized, and completed his work of pardon, and she had a yearning to be departing in peace, whither her sunshine was gone. But he had told her not to wish that his child should be motherless; she had to train her to be fit to meet him. The sunshine was past, but she had plenty to do in the shade, and it was for his sake. She would, therefore, be content to remain to fulfil her duties among the dear ones to whom he had trusted her for comfort, and with the sense of renewed communion with him that she had found in returning again to church.

So felt Amabel, as she entered into the calm that followed the one year in which she had passed through the great events of life, and known the chief joy and deepest grief that she could ever experience.

It was far otherwise with her sister. Laura's term of trouble seemed to be ending, and the spring of life beginning to dawn on her.

Doubt and fear were past; she and Philip were secure of each other, he was pardoned, and they could be together without apprehension, or playing tricks with their consciences; but she had as yet scarcely been able to spend any time with him; and as Charles said, their ways were far more grave and less lover-like than would have seemed natural after their long separation.

In truth, romantic and uncalculating as their attachment was, they never had been lover-like. They had never had any fears or doubts; her surrender of her

soul had been total, and every thought, feeling, and judgment had taken its colour from him as entirely as if she had been a wife of many years' standing. She never opened her mind to perceive that he had led her to act wrongly, and all her unhappiness had been from anxiety for him, not repentance on her own account; for so complete was her idolatry, that she entirely overlooked her failure in duty to her parents.

It took her by surprise when, as they set out together that evening to walk home from East-hill, he said, as soon as they were apart from the village—

‘Laura, you have more to forgive than all.’

‘Don’t speak so, Philip, pray don’t. Do you think I would not have borne far more unhappiness willingly for your sake? Is it not all forgotten as if it had not been?’

‘It is not unhappiness I meant,’ he replied, ‘though I cannot bear to think of what you have undergone. Unhappiness enough have I caused indeed. But I meant, that you have to forgive the advantage I took of your reliance on me to lead you into error, when you were too young to know what it amounted to.’

‘It was not an engagement,’ faltered Laura.

‘Laura, don’t for mercy’s sake recall my own hateful sophistries,’ exclaimed Philip, as if unable to control the pain it gave him; ‘I have had enough of that from my sister;’ then softening instantly: ‘it was self-deceit; a deception first of myself, then of you. You had not experience enough to know whither I was leading you, till I had involved you; and when the sight of death showed me the fallacy of the salve to my conscience, I had nothing for it but to confess, and leave you to bear the consequences. O Laura! when I think of my conduct towards you, it seems even worse than that towards—towards your brother-in-law!’

His low, stern tone of bitter suffering and self-reproach was something new and frightful to Laura.

She clung to his arm and tried to say—‘O, don’t speak in that way! You know you meant the best. You could not help being mistaken.’

‘If I did know any such thing, Laura! but the misery of perceiving that my imagined anxiety for his good,—his good, indeed!—was but a cloak for my personal enmity—you can little guess it.’

Laura tried to say that appearances were against Guy, but he would not hear.

‘If they were, I triumphed in them. I see now that a shade of honest desire to see him exculpated would have enabled me to find the clue. If I had gone to St. Mildred’s at once—interrogated him as a friend—seen Wellwood—but dwelling on the *ifs* of the last two years can bring nothing but distraction,’ he added, pausing suddenly.

‘And remember,’ said Laura, ‘that dear Guy himself was always grateful to you. He always upheld that you acted for his good. Oh! the way he took it was the one comfort I had last year.’

‘The acutest sting, and yet the only balm,’ murmured Philip; ‘see, Laura,’ and he opened the first leaf of Guy’s prayer-book, which he had been using at the christening.

A whispered ‘Dear Guy!’ was the best answer she could make, and the tears were in her eyes. ‘He was so very kind to me, when he saw me unhappy that wedding-day.’

‘Did Amy tell you his last words to me?’

‘No,’ said Laura.

‘God bless you and my sister!’ he repeated, so low that she could hardly hear.

‘Amy left that for you to tell,’ said Laura, as her tears streamed fast. ‘How can we speak of her, Philip?’

‘Only as an angel of pardon and peace!’ he answered.

‘I don’t know how to tell you of all her kindness,’ said Laura; ‘half the bitterness of it seemed to be over when once she was in the house again, and, all the

winter, going into her room—was like going into some peaceful place where one must find comfort.’

‘Spirits of peace, where are ye?’ I could have said, when I saw her drive away at Recoara, and carry all good angels with her, except those that could not but hover round that grave.’

‘How very sad it must have been! Did——’

‘Don’t speak of it; don’t ask me of it,’ said Philip, hastily. ‘There is nothing in my mind but a tumult of horror and darkness that it is madness to remember. Tell me of yourself—tell me that you have not been hurt by all that I have brought on you.’

‘Oh, no!’ said Laura; ‘besides, that is all at an end.’

‘At an end! Laura, I fear in joining your fate to mine, you will find care and grief by no means at an end. You must be content to marry a saddened, remorseful man, broken down in health and spirits, his whole life embittered by that fatal remembrance, forced to endure an inheritance that seems to have come like the prosperity of the wicked. Yet you are ready to take all this? Then, Laura, that precious, most precious love, that has endured through all, will be the one drop of comfort through the rest of my life.’

She could not but hear such words with thrills of rejoicing affection; and on they walked, Laura trembling and struck with sorrow at the depth of repentance he now and then disclosed, though not in the least able to fathom it, thinking it all his nobleness of mind, justifying him to herself, idolizing him too much to own he had ever been wrong; yet the innate power of tact and sympathy teaching her no longer to combat his self-reproaches, and repeat his former excuses, but rather to say something soothing and caressing, or put in some note of thankfulness and admiration of Amy and Guy. This was the best thing she could do for him, as she was not capable, like Amy, of acknowledging that his repentance was well-founded. She was a nurse, not a physician, to the wounded spirit; but a very good and gentle nurse she was, and the thorough enjoyment of

her affection and sympathy, the opening into confidence, and the freedom from doubt and suspense, were comforts that were doing him good every hour.

The christening party consisted only of the Rosses and Dr. Mayerne, who had joined them at East-hill church, and walked home with Mr. Edmonstone. They could not have been without him, so grateful were they for his kindness all through their anxious winter, and Mr. Edmonstone was well pleased to tell him on the way home that they might look to having a wedding in the family; it had been a very long attachment, constancy as good as a story, and he could all along have told what was the matter, when mamma was calling in the doctor to account for Laura's looking pale.

The doctor was not surprised at the news, for perhaps he, too, had had some private theory about those pale looks; but knowing pretty well the sentiments Charles had entertained the winter before last, he was curious to find out how he regarded this engagement. Charles spoke of it in the most ready, cordial way. 'Well, doctor, so you have heard our news! I flatter myself we have as tall and handsome a pair of lovers to exhibit here, as any in the United Kingdom, when we have fattened him a little into condition.'

'Never was there a better match,' said Dr. Mayerne.

'Made for each other all along. One could not see them without feeling it was the first chapter of a novel.'

When Mrs. Edmonstone came in, the doctor was a little taken aback. He thought her mind must be with poor Sir Guy, and was afraid the lovers had been in such haste as to pain Lady Morville; for there was a staidness and want of *épanchement du cœur* of answering that was very unlike her usual warm manner. At dinner, Mr. Edmonstone was in high spirits, delighted at Amy's recovery, happy to have a young man about the house again, charmed to see two lovers together, pleased that Laura should be mistress of Redclyffe, since it could not belong to Amy's child; altogether,

as joyous as ever. His wife, being at ease about Amy, did her best to smile, and even laugh, though sad at heart all the time, as she missed the father from the christening feast, and thought how happy she had been in that far different reunion last year. It might be the same with Charles; but the outward effect was exhibited in lively nonsense; Charlotte's spirits were rising fast, and only Philip and Laura themselves were grave and silent, she, the more so, because she was disappointed to find that the one walk back from East-hill, much as he had enjoyed it, had greatly tired Philip. However, the others talked enough without them; and Mr. Edmonstone was very happy, drinking the health of Miss Morville, and himself carrying a bit of the christening cake to the mamma in the drawing-room.

There sat Amabel by the fire, knowing that from henceforth she must exert herself to take part in the cheerfulness of the house, and willing to join the external rejoicing in her child's christening, or at least not to damp it by remaining up stairs. Yet any one but Mr. Edmonstone would have seen more sadness than pleasure in the sweet smile with which she met and thanked him; but they were cheerful tones in which she replied, and in her presence everything was hushed and gentle, subdued, yet not mournful. The spirit of that evening was only recognised after it was past, and then it ever grew fairer and sweeter in recollection, so as never to be forgotten by any of those who shared it.

CHAPTER XX.

She was not changed when sorrow came,
That awed the sternest men ;
It rather seemed she kept her flame
To comfort us till then.

But sorrow passed, and others smiled
With happiness once more ;
And she drew back, the spirit mild
She still had been before.

S. R.

PHILIP'S marriage could not take place at once. No one said, but every one felt, that it must not be talked of till the end of Amabel's first year of widowhood ; and in the meantime Philip remained at Hollywell, gaining strength every day, making more progress in one week than he had done in six at St. Mildred's, finding that, as his strength returned, his mind and memory regained their tone, and he was as capable as ever of applying to business, and, above all, much settled and comforted by some long conversations with Mr. Ross.

Still he could not endure the thought of being at Redclyffe. The business connected with it was always performed with pain and dislike, and he shrank with suffering at every casual mention of his going thither. Mrs. Edmonstone began to wonder whether he could mean to linger at Hollywell all the summer, and Amabel had some fears that it would end in his neglecting Redclyffe, till a letter arrived from Lord Thorndale, saying that his brother, the member

for Moorworth, had long been thinking of giving up his seat, and latterly had only waited in hopes that the succession of Redclyffe might come to Philip Morville. Moorworth was entirely under the Thorndale and Morville interest, and Lord Thorndale wrote to propose that Philip should come forward at once, inviting him to Thorndale instead of going to his own empty house.

To be in parliament had been one of the favourite visions of Philip's youth, and for that very reason he hesitated, taking it as one of the strange fulfilments of his desires that had become punishments. He could not but feel that as this unhappy load of wealth had descended on him, he was bound to make it as beneficial as he could to others, and, not seeking for rest or luxury, to stand in the gap where every good man and true was needed. But still he dreaded his old love of distinction. He disliked a London life for Laura, and he thought that, precarious as his health had become, it might expose her to much anxiety, since he was determined that if he undertook it at all he would never be an idle member.

It ended in his referring the decision to Laura, who, disliking London, fearful for his health, eager for his glory, and reluctant to keep back such a champion from the battle, was much perplexed, only desirous to say what he wished, yet not able to make out what that might be. She carried her doubts to Charles and Amabel, who both pronounced that the thought of going to Redclyffe seemed far worse for him than any degree of employment—that occupation of the mind was the best thing for his spirits; and ended by recommending that Dr. Mayerne should be consulted.

He was of the same opinion. He said a man could hardly have two fevers following, and one of them upon the brain, without having reason to remember them. That his constitution had been seriously weakened, and there was an excitability of brain and

nerves which made care requisite ; but depression of spirits was the chief thing to guard against, and a London life, provided he did not overwork himself, was better for him than solitude at Redclyffe.

Accordingly Philip went to Thorndale, and was returned for Moorworth without opposition. Markham sent his nephew to transact business with him at Thorndale, for he could not bear to meet him himself, and while there was any prospect of his coming to Redclyffe, walked about in paroxysms of grunting and ill-humour. The report that Mr. Morville was engaged to the other Miss Edmonstone did but render him more furious, for he regarded it as a sort of outrage to Lady Morville's feelings that a courtship should be carried on in the house with her. She was at present the object of all his devoted affection for the family, and he would not believe, but that she had been as much disappointed at the birth of her daughter, as he was himself. He would not say one word against Mr. Morville, but looked and growled enough to make Mr. Ashford afraid that the new squire would find him very troublesome.

The Ashfords were in the state of mind themselves to think that Mr. Morville ought to be everything excellent to make up for succeeding Sir Guy ; but having a very high opinion of him to begin with, they were very sorry to find all Redclyffe set against him. In common with the parish, they were very anxious for the first report of his arrival, and at length he came. James Thorndale, as before, drove him thither, coming to the Ashfords while he was busy with Markham. He would not go up to the Park, he only went through some necessary business with Markham, and then walked down to the Cove, afterwards sitting for about ten minutes in Mrs. Ashford's drawing-room.

The result of the visit was that old James Robinson reported that the new squire took on as much about poor Sir Guy as any one could do, and turned as pale

as if he had been going into a swoon, when he spoke his name and gave Ben his message. And as to poor Ben, the old man said, he regularly did cry like a child, and small blame to him, to hear that Sir Guy had took thought of him at such a time and so far away; and he verily believed Ben could never take again to his bad ways, after such a message as that.

Markham was gruff with the Robinsons for some time after, and was even heard to mutter something about worshipping the rising sun, an act of idolatry of which he could not be accused, since it was in the most grudging manner that he allowed, that Mr. Morville's sole anxiety seemed to be to continue all Sir Guy had undertaken; while Mrs. Ashford, on the other hand, was much affected by the account her cousin James had been giving her of the grief that he had suffered at Sir Guy's death, his long illness, his loss of spirits, the reluctance he had shown to come here at all, and his present unconquerable dread of going to the Park.

He was soon after in London, where, as far as could be judged in such early days, he seemed likely to distinguish himself according to the fondest hopes that Margaret or Laura could ever have entertained. Laura was only afraid he was overworking himself, especially as, having at present little command of ready money, he lived in a small lodging, kept no horse, and did not enter into society; but she was reassured when he came to Hollywell for a day or two at Whitsuntide, not having indeed regained flesh or colour, but appearing quite well, in better spirits, and very eager about political affairs.

All would have been right that summer, but that, as Philip observed, the first evening of his arrival, Amabel was not looking as well as she had done at the time of the christening. She had, just after it, tried her strength and spirits too much, and had ever since been not exactly unwell, but sad and weary, more de-

jected than ever before, unable to bear the sight of flowers or the sound of music, and evidently suffering much under the recurrence of the season, which had been that of her great happiness—the summer sunshine, the long evenings, the nightingales' songs. She was fatigued by the most trifling exertion, and seemed able to take interest in nothing but her baby, and a young widow in the village, who was in a decline ; and though she was willing to do all that was asked of her, it was in a weary, melancholy manner, as if she had no peace but in being allowed to sit alone, drooping over her child.

From society she especially shrank, avoiding every chance of meeting visitors, and distressed and harassed when her father brought home some of his casual dinner guests, and was vexed not to see her come into the drawing-room in the evening. If she did make the effort of coming, to please him, she was so sure to be the worse for it, that her mother would keep her up stairs the next time, and try to prevent her from knowing that her father was put out, and declared it was nonsense to expect poor Amy to get up her spirits while she never saw a living soul, and only sat moping in the dressing-room.

A large dinner-party did not interfere with her, for even he could not expect her to appear at it ; and one of these he gave during Philip's visit, for the pleasure of exhibiting such company as the M.P. for Moorworth.

After dinner, Charlotte told Mary Ross to go and see Amy. Not finding her in the dressing-room, she knocked at her own door. 'Come in,' answered the low soft voice ; and in the window, overhung by the long shoots of the roses, Amabel's close cap and small head were seen against the deep-blue evening sky, as she sat in the summer twilight, her little one asleep in her cot.

'Thank you for coming,' said she. 'I thought you

would not mind sitting here with baby and me. I have sent Anne out walking.'

'How pretty she looks !' said Mary, stooping over the infant. 'Sleep is giving her quite a colour ; and how fast she grows !'

'Poor little woman !' said Amy, sighing.

'Tired, Amy ?' said Mary, sitting down, and taking up the little lambswool shoe, that Amy had been knitting.

'N—no, thank you,' said Amy, with another sigh.

'I am afraid you are. You have been walking to Alice Lamsden's again.'

'I don't think that tires me. Indeed, I believe the truth is,' and her voice sounded especially sad in the subdued tone in which she spoke, that she might not disturb the child, 'I am not so much tired with what I do, which is little enough, as of the long, long life that is before me.'

Mary's heart was full, but she did not show her thought otherwise than by a look towards the babe.

'Yes, poor little darling,' said Amabel, 'I know there is double quantity to be done for her, but I am so sorry for her, when I think she must grow up without knowing him.'

'She has you, though,' Mary could not help saying, as she felt that Amabel was superior to all save her husband.

Perhaps Amy did not hear ; she went up to the cot, and went on :—'If he had but once seen her, if she had but had one kiss, one touch that I could tell her of by and by, it would not seem as if she was so very fatherless. Oh no, baby, I must wait, that you may know something about him ; for no one else can tell you so well what he was, though I can't tell much !' She presently returned to her seat. 'No, I don't believe I really wish I was like poor Alice,' said she ; 'I hope not, I am sure I don't, for her sake. But Mary, I never knew till I was well again, how much I had reckoned

on dying when she was born. I did not think I was wishing it, but it seemed likely, and I was obliged to arrange things in case of it. Then somehow, as he came back last spring, after that sad winter, it seemed as if this spring, though he would not come back to me, I might be going to him.'

'But then she comforted you.'

'Yes, that she did, my precious one; I was so glad of her, it was a sort of having him again, and so it is still sometimes, and will be more so, I dare say. I am very thankful for her, indeed I am; and I hope I am not repining, for it does not signify after all, in the end, if I am weary and lonely sometimes. I wish I was sure it was not wrong. I know I don't wish to alter things.'

'No, I am sure you don't.'

'Ah!' said Amabel, smiling, 'it is only the old, silly little Amy that does feel such a heart-aching and longing for one glance of his eye, or touch of his hand, or sound of his foot in the passage. Oh, Mary, the worst of all is to wake up, after dreaming I have heard his voice. There is nothing for it but to take our baby and hold her very tight.'

'Dearest Amy! But you are not blaming yourself for these feelings. It might be wrong to indulge them and foster them; but while you struggle with them, they can't in themselves be wrong.'

'I hope not,' said Amabel, pausing to think. 'Yes, I have 'the joy' at the bottom still; I know it is all quite right, and it came straight from heaven, as he said. I can get happy very often when I am by myself, or at church, with him; it is only when I miss his bright outside and can't think myself into the inner part, that it is so forlorn and dreary. I can do pretty well alone. Only I wish I could help beings so troublesome and disagreeable to everybody,' said Amy, concluding in a matter-of-fact tone.

'My dear!' said Mary, almost laughing.

‘It is so stupid of me to be always poorly, and making mamma anxious when there’s nothing the matter with me. And I know I am a check on them down stairs—papa, and Charlotte, and all—they are very kind and considerate, and yet’—she paused—‘and it is a naughty feeling; but when I feel all those dear kind eyes watching me always, and wanting me to be happy, it is rather oppressive, especially when I can’t; but if I try not to disappoint them, I do make such a bad hand of it, and am sure to break down afterwards, and that grieves mamma all the more.’

‘It will be better when this time of year is over,’ said Mary.

‘Perhaps; yes. He always seemed to belong to summer days, and to come with them. Well, I suppose trials always come in a different shape from what one expects; for I used to think I could bear all the doom with him, but I did not know it would be without him, and yet that is the best. Oh, baby!’

‘I should not have come to disturb her.’

‘No—never mind; she never settles fairly to sleep till we are shut in by ourselves. Hush! hush, darling—No? Will nothing do but being taken up? Well, then, there! Come, and show your godmamma what a black fringe those little wakeful eyes are getting.’

And when Mary went down it was with the conviction that those black eye-lashes, too marked to be very pretty in so young a babe, were more of a comfort to Amabel than anything she could say.

The evening wore on, and at length Laura came into her sister’s room. She looked fagged and harassed, the old face she used to wear in the time of disguise and secrecy. Amabel asked if it had been a tiresome party.

‘Yes—no—I don’t know. Just like others,’ said Laura.

‘You are tired at any rate,’ said Amabel. ‘You

took too long a ride with Philip. I saw you come in very late.'

'I am not in the least tired, thank you.'

'Then he is,' said Amabel. 'I hope he has not one of his headaches again.'

'No,' said Laura, still in a dissatisfied, uncomfortable tone.

'No? Dear Laura, I am sure there is something wrong;' and with a little more of her winning, pleading kindness, she drew from Laura that Philip had told her she idolized him. He had told her so very gently and kindly, but he had said she idolized him in a manner that was neither good for herself nor him; and he went on to blame himself for it, which was what she could not bear. It had been rankling in her mind ever since that he had found fault with her for loving him so well, and it had made her very unhappy. She *could* not love him less, and how should she please him? She had much rather he had blamed her than himself.

'I think I see what he means,' said Amy, thoughtfully. 'He has grown afraid of himself, and afraid of being admired now.'

'But how am I to help that, Amy?' said Laura, with tears in her eyes; 'he cannot help being the first, the very first of all with me——'

'No, no,' said Amy, quickly, 'not the very first, or what would you do if you were to be—like me? Don't turn away, dear Laura; I don't think I ever could bear this at all, if dear Guy had not kept it always before my eyes from the very first that we were to look to something else besides each other.'

'Of course, I meant the first earthly thing,' said Laura; but it was not heartfelt—she knew she ought, therefore she thought she did.

'And so,' proceeded Amy, 'I think if that other is first, it would make you have some standard of right besides himself; then you would be a stay and help to him. I think that is what he means.'

‘Amy! let me ask you,’ said Laura, a little entreatingly, yet as if she must needs put the question—‘surely, you never thought Guy had faults?’

Her colour deepened. ‘Yes, Laura,’ she answered, firmly. ‘I could not have understood his repentance if I had not thought so. And, dear Laura, if you will forgive me for saying it, it would be much better for yourself and Philip, if you would see the truth.’

‘I thought you forgave him,’ murmured Laura.

‘Oh, Laura! but does not that word ‘forgive’ imply something? I could not have done anything to comfort him that day, if I had not believed he had something to be comforted for. It can’t be pleasant to him to see you think his repentance vain.’

‘It is noble and great.’

‘But if it was not real, it would be thrown away. Besides, dear Laura, do let me say this for once. If you would but understand that you let him lead you into what was not right, and be really sorry for that, and show mamma that you are, I do think it would all begin much more happily when you are married.’

‘I could never have told, till I was obliged to betray myself,’ said Laura. ‘You know, Amy, it was no engagement. We never wrote to each other, we had but one walk; it was no business of his to speak till he could hope for papa’s consent to our marriage. It would have been all confusion if he had told, and that would have been only that we had always loved each other with all our hearts, which every one knew before.’

‘Yet, Laura, it was what preyed on him when he thought he was dying.’

‘Because it was the only thing like a fault he could think of,’ said Laura, excited by this shade of blame to defend him vehemently—‘because his scruples are high and noble and generous.’

She spoke so eagerly, that the baby’s voice again broke on the conversation, and she was obliged to go

away; but though her idolatry was complete, it did not seem to give full satisfaction or repose. As to Philip, though his love for her was unchanged, it now and then was felt, though not owned by him, that she was not fully a helpmeet, only a 'Self;' not such a 'Self' as he had left at St. Mildred's, but still reflecting on him his former character, instead of aiding him to a new one.

CHAPTER XXI.

But nature to its inmost part
Faith had refined ; and to her heart
A peaceful cradle given,
Calm as the dew-drops free to rest
Within a breeze-fanned rose's breast
Till it exhales to Heaven.

WORDSWORTH.

IT had long been a promise that Mr. Edmonstone should take Charlotte to visit her grandmamma, in Ireland. They would have gone last autumn, but for Guy's illness; and now aunt Charlotte wrote to hasten the performance of the project. Lady Mabel was very anxious to see them, she said; and having grown much more infirm of late, seemed to think it would be the last meeting with her son. She talked so much of Mrs. Edmonstone and Laura, that it was plain that she wished extremely for a visit from them, though she did not like to ask it, in the present state of the family.

A special invitation was sent to Bustle; indeed, Charles said Charlotte could not have gone without his permission, for he reigned like a tyrant over her, evidently believing her created for no purpose but to wait on him, and take him to walk.

Laura was a great favourite at the cottage of Kilcoran, and felt she ought to offer to go. Philip fully agreed, and held out some hopes of following as soon as the session was over, and he had been to Redclyffe about some business that had been deferred too long.

And now it appeared that Mr. Edmonstone had a great desire to take his wife, and she herself said, that under any other circumstances she should have been very desirous of going. She had not been to Ireland for fifteen years, and was sorry to have seen so little of her mother-in-law; and now that it had been proved that Charles could exist without her, she would not have hesitated to leave him, but for Amabel's state of health and spirits, which made going from home out of the question.

Charles and Amabel did not think so. It was not to be endured, that when grandmamma wished for her, she should stay at home for them without real necessity; besides, the fatigue, anxiety, and sorrow she had undergone of late, had told on her, and had made her alter perceptibly, from being remarkably fresh and youthful, to be somewhat aged; and the change to a new scene, where she could not be distressing herself at every failure in cheerfulness of poor Amy's, was just the thing to do her good.

Amabel was not afraid of the sole charge of Charles or of the baby, for she had been taught but too well to manage for herself; she understood Charles very well, and had too much quiet good sense to be fanciful about her very healthy baby. Though she was inexperienced, with old nurse hard by, and Dr. Mayerne at Broadstone, there was no fear of her not having good counsel enough. She was glad to be of some use, by enabling her mother to leave Charles, and her only fear was of being dull company for him; but as he was so kind as to bear it, she would do her best, and perhaps their neighbours would come and enliven him sometimes.

Charles threw his influence into the same scale. His affectionate observation had shown him that it oppressed Amabel's spirits to be the object of such constant solicitude, and he was convinced it would be better for her, both to have some necessary occupation and to be free from that perpetual mournful watching of her

mother's, that caused her to 'make the efforts to be cheerful which did her more harm than anything else.

To let her alone to look and speak as she pleased, without the fear of paining and disappointing those she loved, keep the house quiet, and give her the employment of household cares and attending on himself, was, he thought, the best thing for her; and he was full of eagerness and pleasure at the very notion of being of service to her, if only by being good for nothing but to be waited on. He thought privately that the spring of his mother's mind had been so much injured by the grief she had herself suffered for 'her son Guy,' her cruel disappointment in Laura, and the way in which she threw herself into all Amy's affliction, that there was a general depression in her way of observing and attending Amy, which did further harm; and that to change the current of her thoughts, and bring her home refreshed and inspirited, would be the beginning of improvement in all. Or, as he expressed it to Dr. Mayerne, 'We shall set off on a new tack.'

His counsel and Mr. Edmonstone's wishes at length decided mamma, on condition that Mary Ross and Dr. Mayerne would promise to write on alternate weeks a full report, moral and physical, as Charles called it. So in due time the goods were packed, Mrs. Edmonstone cried heartily over the baby, advised Amabel endlessly about her, and finally looked back through her tears, as she drove away, to see Charles nodding and waving his hand at the bay window, and Amabel standing with her parting smile and good-bye on the steps.

The reports, moral and physical, proved that Charles had judged wisely. Amabel was less languid as she had more cause for exertion, and seemed relieved by the absence of noise and hurry, spending more time down stairs, and appearing less weary in the evening. She still avoided the garden; but she began to like short drives with her brother, in the pony-carriage,

when he drove on in silence, and let her lean back and gaze up into the sky, or into the far distance, undisturbed. Now and then he would be rejoiced by a bright, genuine smile, perfectly refreshing, at some of the pretty ways of the babe, a small, but plump and lively creature, beginning to grasp with her hands, laugh, and gaze about with eyes that gave promise of the peculiar colour and brilliancy of her father's. Amabel was afraid she might be tempted into giving Charles too much of the little lady's society; but he was very fond of her, regarding her with an odd mixture of curiosity and amusement, much entertained with watching what he called her unaccountable manners, and greatly flattered when he could succeed in attracting her notice. Indeed, the first time she looked full at him with a smile on the verge of a laugh, it completely overcame him, by the indescribably forcible manner in which it suddenly recalled the face which had always shone on him like a sunbeam. Above all, it was worth anything to see the looks she awoke in her mother, for which he must have loved her, even had she not been Guy's child.

In the evening, especially on Sunday, Amabel would sometimes talk to him as she had never yet been able to do, about her last summer's journey, and her stay at Recoara, and his way of listening and answering had in it something that gave her great pleasure; while, on his side, he deemed each fresh word of Guy's a sort of treasure for which to be grateful to her. The brother and sister were a great help and happiness to each other; Amabel found herself restored to Charles, as Guy had liked to think of her, and Charles felt as if the old childish fancies were fulfilled, in which he and Amy were always to keep house together. He was not in the least dull; and though his good-natured visitors in the morning were welcome, and received with plenty of his gay, lively talk, he did not by any means stand in need of the compassion they felt for him, and could have done very well without them;

while the evenings alone with Amy had in them something so pleasant that they were almost better than those when Mr. Ross and Mary came to tea. He wrote word to his mother that she might be quite at ease about them; and he thought Amy would get through the anniversaries of September better while the house was quiet, so that she need not think of trying to hurry home.

He was glad to have done so, for the letters, which scarcely missed a day in being written by his mother and Charlotte, seemed to show that their stay was likely to be long. Lady Mabel was more broken than they had expected, and claimed a long visit, as she was sure it would be their last, while the Kilcoran party had taken possession of Laura and Charlotte as if they never meant to let them go. Charlotte wrote her brother very full and very droll accounts of the Iricisms around her, which she enjoyed thoroughly, and Charles, declaring he never expected to see little Charlotte come out in the character of the facetious correspondent, used to send Mary Ross into fits of laughing by what he read to her. Mr. Fielder, the tutor, wrote Charlotte, was very nearly equal to Eveleen's description of him, but very particularly agreeable, in fact, the only man who had any conversation, whom she had seen since she had been at Kilcoran.

'Imagine,' said Charles, 'the impertinent little puss setting up for intellectual conversation, forsooth!'

'That's what comes of living with good company,' said Mary.

The brother and sister used sometimes to drive to Broadstone to fetch their letters by the second post.

'Charlotte, of course,' said Charles, as he opened one. 'My Lady Morville, what's yours?'

'Only Mr. Markham,' said Amabel, 'about the winding up of our business together, I suppose. What does Charlotte say?'

'Charlotte is in a fit of impudence, for which she deserves chastisement,' said Charles, unable to help

laughing, as he read,—‘ Our last event was a call from the fidus Achates, who it seems can no longer wander up and down the Mediterranean without his pious Æneas, and so has left the army, and got a diplomatic appointment somewhere in Germany. Lord Kilcoran has asked him to come and stay here, and Mabel and I are quite sure he comes for a purpose. Of course he has chosen this time, in order that he may be able to have his companion before his eyes, as a model for courtship, and I wish I had you to help me look on whenever Philip comes, as that laugh I must enjoy alone with Bustle. However, when Philip will come we cannot think, for we have heard nothing of him this age, not even Laura, and she is beginning to look very anxious about him. Do tell us if you know anything about him. The last letter was when parliament was prorogued, and he was going to Redclyffe, at least three weeks ago.’

‘ I wonder if Mr. Markham mentions him,’ said Amabel, hastily unfolding her letter, which was, as she expected, about the executor’s business, but glancing on to the end she exclaimed,—‘ Ah ! here it is. Listen, Charlie. ‘ Mr. Morville has been here for the last few weeks, and is, I fear, very unwell. He has been entirely confined to the house, almost ever since his arrival, by violent headache, which has completely disabled him from attending to business ; but he will not call in any advice. I make a point of going to see him every day, though I believe my presence is anything but acceptable, as in his present state of health and spirits I cannot think it right that he should be left to servants.’ Poor fellow ! Redclyffe has been too much for him.’

‘ Over-worked, I suppose,’ said Charles. ‘ I thought he was coming it pretty strong these last few weeks.’

‘ Not even writing to Laura ! How very bad he must be ! I will write at once to ask Mr. Markham for more particulars.’

She did so, and on the third day they drove again to fetch the answer. It was a much worse account. Mr. Morville was, said Markham, suffering dreadfully from

headache, and lay on the sofa all day, almost unable to speak or move, but resolved against having medical advice, though his own treatment of himself did not at all succeed in relieving him. There was extreme depression of spirits, and an unwillingness to see any one. He had positively refused to admit either Lord Thorn-dale or Mr. Ashford, and would hardly bear to see Markham himself, who, indeed, only forced his presence on him from thinking it unfit to leave him entirely to the servants, and would be much relieved if some of Mr. Morville's friends were present to free him from the responsibility.

'Hem!' said Charles. 'I can't say it sounds comfortable.'

'It is just as I feared!' said Amy. 'Great excitability of brain and nerve, Dr. Mayerne said. All the danger of a brain fever again! Poor Laura! What is to be done?'

Charles was silent.

'It is for want of some one to talk to him,' said Amabel. 'I know how he broods over his sad recollections, and Redclyffe must make it so much worse. If mamma and Laura were but at home to go to him, it might save him, and it would be fearful for him to have another illness, reduced as he is. How I wish he was here!'

'He cannot come, I suppose,' said Charles, 'or he would be in Ireland.'

'Yes. How well Guy knew when he said it would be worse for him than for me! How I wish I could do something now to make up for running away from him in Italy. If I was but at Redclyffe!'

'Do you really wish it?' said Charles, surprised.

'Yes, if I could do him any good.'

'Would you go there?'

'If I had but papa or mamma to go with me.'

'Do you think I should do as well?'

'Charlie!'

‘If you think there would be any use in it, and choose to take the trouble of lugging me about the country, I don’t see why you should not.’

‘Oh! Charlie, how very kind! How thankful poor Laura will be to you! I do believe it will save him!’ cried Amabel, eagerly.

‘But Amy,’—he paused—‘shall you like to see Redclyffe?’

‘Oh! that is no matter,’ said she, quickly. ‘I had rather see after Philip than anything. I told you how he was made my charge, you know. And Laura! Only will it not be too tiring for you?’

‘I can’t see how it should hurt me. But I forget, what is to be done about your daughter?’

‘I don’t know what harm it could do her,’ said Amy, considering. ‘Mrs. Gresham brought a baby of only three months old from Scotland the other day, and she is six. It surely cannot hurt her, but we will ask Dr. Mayerne.’

‘Mamma will never forgive us if we don’t take the doctor into our councils.’

‘Arnaud can manage for us. We would sleep in London, and go on by an early train, and we can take our—I mean my—carriage, for the journey after the railroad. It would not be too much for you. How soon could we go?’

‘The sooner the better,’ said Charles. ‘If we are to do him any good, it must be speedily, or it will be a case of shutting the stable-door. Why not to-morrow?’

The project was thoroughly discussed that evening, but still with the feeling as if it could not be real, and when they parted at night they said,—‘We will see how the scheme looks in the morning.’

Charles was still wondering whether it was a dream, when the first thing he heard in the court below his window was,—

‘Here, William, here’s a note from my lady for you to take to Dr. Mayerne.’

‘They be none of them ill?’ answered William’s voice.

‘O no; my lady has been up this hour, and Mr. Charles has rung his bell. Stop, William, my lady said you were to call at Harris’s and bring home a *Bradshaw*.’

Reality, indeed, thought Charles, marvelling at his sister, and his elastic spirits throwing him into the project with a sort of enjoyment, partaking of the pleasure of being of use, the spirit of enterprise, and the ‘fun’ of starting independently on an expedition unknown to all the family.

He met Amabel with a smile that showed both were determined. He undertook to announce the plan to his mother, and she said she would write to tell Mr. Markham that as far as could be reckoned on two such frail people, they would be at Redclyffe the next evening, and he must use his own discretion about giving Mr. Morville the note which she enclosed.

Dr. Mayerne came in time for breakfast, and the letter from Markham was at once given to him.

‘A baddish state of things, eh, doctor?’ said Charles. ‘Well, what do you think this lady proposes? To set off forthwith, both of us, to take charge of him. What do you think of that, Dr. Mayerne?’

‘I should say it was the only chance for him,’ said the doctor, looking only at the latter. ‘Spirits and health reacting on each other, I see it plain enough. Over-worked in parliament, doing nothing in moderation, going down to that gloomy old place, dreaming away by himself, going just the right way to work himself into another attack on the brain, and then he is done for. I don’t know that you could do a wiser thing than go to him, for he is no more fit to tell what is good for him than a child.’ So spoke the doctor, thinking only of the patient, till looking up at the pair he was dismissing to such a charge, the helpless, crippled Charles, unable to cross the room without crutches, and Amabel, her delicate face and fragile figure in her widow’s mourning, looking like a thing to

be pitied and nursed with the tenderest care, with that young child, too, he broke off and said,—‘ But you don’t mean you are in earnest ?’

‘ Never more so in our lives,’ said Charles; on which Dr. Mayerne looked so wonderingly and inquiringly at Amabel, that she answered,—

‘ Yes, that we are, if you think it safe for Charles and baby.’

‘ Is there no one else to go ? What’s become of his sister ?’

‘ That would never do,’ said Charles; ‘ that is not the question,’ and he detailed their plan.

‘ Well, I don’t see why it should not succeed,’ said the doctor, ‘ or how you can any of you damage yourselves.’

‘ And baby ?’ said Amy.

‘ What should happen to her, do you think ?’ said the doctor, with his kind, reassuring roughness. ‘ Unless you leave her behind in the carriage, I don’t see what harm she could come to, and even then, if you direct her properly, she will come safe to hand.’

Amabel smiled, and saying she would fetch her to be inspected, ran up stairs with the light nimble step of former days.

‘ There goes one of the smallest editions of the wonders of the world !’ said Charles, covering a sigh with a smile. ‘ You don’t think it will do her any harm ?’

‘ Not if she wishes it. I have long thought a change, a break, would be the best thing for her—poor child ! I should have sent her to the seaside, if you had been more moveable, and if I had not seen every fuss about her made it worse.’

‘ That’s what I call being a reasonable and valuable doctor,’ said Charles. ‘ If you had routed the poor little thing out to the sea, she would have only pined the more. But suppose the captain turns out too bad for her management, for old Markham seems in a proper taking ?’

‘Hm! No, I don’t expect it is come to that.’

‘Be that as it may, I have a head, if nothing else, and some one is wanted. I’ll write to you according as we find Philip.’

The doctor was wanted for another private interview, in which to assure Amabel that there was no danger for Charles, and then, after promising to come to Redclyffe if there was occasion, and engaging to write and tell Mrs. Edmonstone they had his consent, he departed to meet them by-and-by at the station, and put Charles into the carriage.

A very busy morning followed; Amabel arranged household affairs as befitted the vice-queen; took care that Charles’s comforts were provided for; wrote many a note; herself took down Guy’s picture, and laid it in her box, before Anne commenced her packing; and lastly, walked down to the village to take leave of Alice Lamsden.

Just as the last hues of sunset were fading, on the following evening, Lady Morville and Charles Edmonstone were passing from the moor into the wooded valley of Redclyffe. Since leaving Moorworth not a word had passed. Charles sat earnestly watching his sister; though there was too much crape in the way for him to see her face, and she was perfectly still, so that all he could judge by was the close, rigid clasping together of the hands, resting on the sleeping infant’s white mantle. Each spot recalled to him some description of Guy’s, the church tower, the school with the two large new windows, the park wall, the rising ground within. What was she feeling? He did not dare to address her, till at the lodge-gate, he exclaimed—‘There’s Markham;’ and, at the same time, was conscious of a feeling between hope and fear, that this might after all be a fool’s errand, and a wonder how they and the master of the house would meet if it turned out that they had taken fright without cause.

At his exclamation, Amy leant forward, and beckoned.

Markham came up to the window, and after the greeting on each side, walked along with his hand on the door, as the carriage slowly mounted the steep hill, answering her questions, 'How is he?'

'No better. He has been putting on leeches, and made himself so giddy, that yesterday he could hardly stand.'

'And they have not relieved him?'

'Not in the least. I am glad you are come, for it has been an absurd way of going on.'

'Is he up?'

'Yes; on the sofa in the library.'

'Did you give him my note? Does he expect us?'

'No; I went to see about telling him this morning, but found him so low and silent, I thought it was better not. He has not opened a letter this week; and he might have refused to see you as he did Lord Thorndale. Besides, I didn't know how he would take my writing about him, though if you had not written, I believe I should have let Mrs. Henley know by this time.'

'There's an escape for him,' murmured Charles to his sister.

'We have done the best in our power to receive you,' proceeded Markham; 'I hope you will find it comfortable, Lady Morville, but——'

'Thank you, I am not afraid,' said Amy, smiling a little.

Markham's eye was on the little white bundle in her lap, but he did not speak of it, and went on with explanations about Mrs. Drew and Bolton, and the sitting-room, and tea being ready.

Charles saw the great red pile of building rise dark, gloomy and haunted-looking before them. The house that should have been Amabel's! Guy's own beloved home! How could she bear it? But she was eagerly asking Markham how Philip should be informed of their arrival, and Markham was looking perplexed, and saying, that to drive under the gateway, into the paved

court, would make a thundering sound, that he dreaded for Mr. Morville. Could Mr. Charles Edmonstone cross the court on foot? Charles was ready to do so; the carriage stopped, Amabel gave the baby to Anne, saw Arnaud help Charles out; and turning to Markham said, 'I had better go to him at once. Arnaud will show my brother the way.'

'The sitting-room, Arnaud,' said Markham, and walked on fast with her, while Charles thought how strange to see her thus pass the threshold of her husband's house, come thither to relieve and comfort his enemy.

She entered the dark-oak hall. On one side the light shone cheerfully from the sitting-room, the other doors were all shut. Markham hesitated, and stood reluctant.

'Yes, you had better tell him I am here,' said she, in the voice, so gentle, that no one perceived its resolution.

Markham knocked at one of the high heavy doors, and softly opened it. Amabel stood behind it, and looked into the room, more than half dark, without a fire, and very large, gloomy, and cheerless, in the grey autumn twilight, that just enabled her to see the white pillows on the sofa, and Philip's figure stretched out on it. Markham advanced, and stood doubtful for an instant, then in extremity, began—'Hem! Lady Morville is come, and——'

Without further delay she came forward, saying—'How are you, Philip?'

He neither moved nor seemed surprised, he only said, 'So you are come to heap more coals on my head.'

A thrill of terror came over her, but she did not show it, as she said, 'I am sorry to find you so poorly.'

It seemed as if before he had taken her presence for a dream; for, entirely roused, he exclaimed, in a tone of great surprise, 'Is it you, Amy?' then sitting up, 'Why? When did you come here?'

'Just now. We were afraid you were ill, we heard a bad account of you, so we have taken you by storm:

Charles, your goddaughter, and I, are come to pay you a visit.'

'Charles! Charles here?' cried Philip, starting up. 'Where is he?'

'Coming in,' said Amy; and Philip, intent only on hospitality, hastened into the hall, and met him at the door, gave him his arm and conducted him where the inviting light guided them to the sitting-room. The full brightness of lamp and fire showed the ashy paleness of his face; his hair, rumpled with lying on the sofa, had, on the temples, acquired a noticeable tint of grey; his whole countenance bore traces of terrible suffering; and Amabel thought that even at Recoara she had never seen him look more wretchedly ill.

'How did you come?' he asked. 'It was very kind. I hope you will be comfortable.'

'We have taken good care of ourselves,' said Amy. 'I wrote to Mr. Markham, for I thought you were not well enough to be worried with preparations. We ought to beg your pardon for breaking on you so unceremoniously.'

'If any one should be at home here——' said Philip, earnestly;—then interrupting himself, he shaded his eyes from the light, 'I don't know how to make you welcome enough. When did you set off?'

'Yesterday afternoon,' said Charles; 'we slept in London, and came on to-day.'

'Have you dined?' said Philip, looking perplexed to know where the dinner could come from.

'Yes; at K——, thank you.'

'What will you have? I'll ring for Mrs. Drew.'

'No, thank you; don't tease yourself. Mrs. Drew will take care of us. Never mind; but how bad your head is!' said Amabel, as he sat down on the sofa, leaning his elbow on his knee, and pressing his hand very hard on his forehead. 'You must lie down and keep quiet, and never mind us. We only want a little tea. I am just going to take off my bonnet, and see what they have done with baby, and then I'll

come down. Pray lie still till then. Mind he does, Charlie.'

They thought she was gone ; but the next moment there she was with the two pillows from the library sofa putting them under Philip's head, and making him comfortable ; while he, overpowered by a fresh access of headache, had neither will nor power to object. She rang, asked for Mrs. Drew, and went.

Philip lay, with closed eyes, as if in severe pain ; and Charles, afraid to disturb him, sat feeling as if it was a dream. That he, with Amy and her child, should be in Guy's home, so differently from their old plans, so very differently from the way she should have arrived. He looked round the room, and everywhere knew what Guy's taste had prepared for his bride—piano, books, prints, similarities to Hollywell, all with a fresh 'new bridal effect, inexpressibly melancholy. They brought a thought of the bright eye, sweet voice, light step, and merry whistle ; and as he said to himself ' gone for ever,' he could have hated Philip, but for the sight of his haggard features, grey hairs, and the deep lines which, at seven-and-twenty, sorrow had traced on his brow.

At length Philip turned and looked up.

' Charles,' he said, ' I trust you have not let her run any risk ?'

' No : we got Dr. Mayerne's permission.'

' It is like all the rest,' said Philip, closing his eyes again. Presently he asked : ' How did you know I was not well ?'

' Markham said something in a business letter that alarmed Amy. She wrote to inquire, and on his second letter we thought we had better come and see after you ourselves.'

No more was said till Amabel returned. She had made some stay up stairs talking to Mrs. Drew, who was bewildered between surprise, joy, and grief ; looking to see that all was comfortable in Charles's room, making arrangements for the child, and at last relieving herself by a short space of calm, to feel where she was,

realise that this was Redclyffe, and whisper to her little girl that it was her father's own home. She knew it was the room he had destined for her; she tried, dark as it was, to see the view of which he had told her, and looked up, over the mantel-piece, at Müller's engraving of St. John. Perhaps that was the hardest time of all her trial, and she felt as if, without his child in her arms, she could never have held up under the sense of desolation that came over her, left behind, while he was in his true home. Left, she told herself, to finish the task he had begun, and to become fit to follow him. Was she not in the midst of fulfilling his last charge, that Philip should be taken care of? It was no time for giving way, and here was his own little messenger of comfort looking up with her sleepy eyes to tell her so. Down she must go, and put off 'thinking herself into happiness,' till the peaceful time of rest; and presently she softly re-entered the sitting-room, bringing to both its inmates in her very presence such solace as she little guessed, in her straightforward desire to nurse Philip, and take care Charles was not made uncomfortable.

That stately house had probably never, since its foundation, seen anything so home-like as Amabel making tea and waiting on her two companions; both she and Charles pleasing each other by enjoying the meal, and Philip giving his cup to be filled again and again, and wondering why one person's tea should taste so unlike another's.

He was not equal to conversation, and Charles and Amabel were both tired, so that tea was scarcely over before they parted for the night; and Amy, frightened at the height and slipperiness of the dark oak stairs, could not be at peace till she had seen Arnaud help Charles safely up them, and made him promise not to come down without assistance in the morning.

She was in the sitting-room soon after nine next morning, and found breakfast on one table, and Charles writing a letter on the other.

‘Well,’ said he, as she kissed him; ‘all right with you and little miss?’

‘Quite, thank you. And are you rested?’

‘Slept like a top, and what did you do? Did you sleep like a sensible woman?’

‘Pretty well, and baby was very good. Have you heard anything of Philip?’

‘Bolton thinks him rather better, and says he is getting up.’

‘How long have you been up?’

‘A long time. I told Arnaud to catch Markham when he came up, as he always does in the morning, to see after Philip, and I have had a conference with him and Bolton, so that I can lay the case before Dr. Mayerne scientifically.’

‘What do you think of it?’

‘I think we came at the right time. He has been getting more and more into work in London, taking no exercise, and so was pretty well knocked up when he came here; and this place finished it. He tried to attend to business about the property, but it always ended in his head growing so bad, he had to leave all to Markham, who, by the way, has been thoroughly propitiated by his anxiety for him. Then he gave up entirely; has not been out of doors, written a note, nor seen a creature the last fortnight, but there he has lain by himself in the library, given up to all manner of dismal thoughts without a break.’

‘How dreadful!’ said Amabel, with tears in her eyes. ‘Then he would not see Mr. Ashford? Surely, he could have done something for him.’

‘I’ll tell you what,’ said Charles, lowering his voice, ‘from what Bolton says, I think he had a dread of worse than brain fever.’

She shuddered, and was paler, but did not speak.

‘I believe,’ continued Charles, ‘that it is one half nervous and the oppression of this place, and the other half, the over straining of a head that was already in a ticklish condition. I don’t think there

was any real danger of more than such a fever as he had at Corfu, which would probably have been the death of him; but I think he dreaded still worse, and that his horror of seeing any one, or writing to Laura, arose from not knowing how far he could control his words.'

'O! I am glad we came,' repeated Amabel, pressing her hands together.

'He has been doctoring himself,' proceeded Charles; 'and probably has kept off the fever by strong measures, but of course, the more he reduced his strength, the greater advantage he gave to what was simply low spirits. He must have had a terrible time of it, and where it would have ended I cannot guess; but it seems to me that most likely, now that he is once roused, he will come right again.'

Just as Charles had finished speaking, he came down, looking extremely ill, weak, and suffering; but calmed, and resting on that entire dependence on Amabel, which had sprung up at Recoara.

She would not let him go back to his gloomy library, but made him lie on the sofa in the sitting-room, and sat there herself, as she thought a little quiet conversation between her and Charles would be the best thing for him. She wrote to Laura, and he sent a message, for he could not yet attempt to write, and Charles wrote reports to his mother and Dr. Mayerne; a little talk now and then going on about family matters.

Amabel asked Philip if he knew that Mr. Thorndale was at Kilcoran.

'Yes,' he said, 'he believed there was a letter from him, but his eyes had ached too much of late to read.'

Mrs. Ashford sent in to ask whether Lady Morville would like to see her. Amabel's face flushed, and she proposed going to her in the library; but Philip, disliking Amy's absence more than the sight of a visitor, begged she might come to the sitting-room.

The Ashfords had been surprised beyond measure at the tidings that Lady Morville had actually come to Redclyffe, and had been very slow to believe it; but when convinced by Markham's own testimony, Mrs. Ashford's first idea had been to go and see if she could be any help to the poor young thing in that great desolate house, whither Mrs. Ashford had not been, since, just a year ago, Markham had conducted her to admire his preparations. There was much anxiety, too, about Mr. Morville, of whose condition Markham had been making a great mystery, and on her return, Mr. Ashford was very eager for her report.

Mr. Morville, she said, did look and seem very far from well, but Lady Morville had told her they hoped it was chiefly from over fatigue, and that rest would soon restore him. Lady Morville herself was a fragile, delicate creature, very sweet looking, but so gentle and shrinking, apparently, that it gave the impression of her having no character at all, not what Mrs. Ashford would have expected Sir Guy to choose. She had spoken very little, and the chief of the conversation had been sustained by her brother.

'I was very much taken with that young Mr. Edmonstone,' said Mrs. Ashford; 'he is about three-and-twenty, sadly crippled, but with such a pleasing, animated face, and so extremely agreeable and sensible. I do not wonder at Sir Guy's enthusiastic way of talking of him. I could almost fancy it was admiration of the brother transferred to the sister.'

'Then after all, you are disappointed in her, and don't lament, like Markham, that she is not mistress here?'

'No: I won't say I am disappointed; she is a very sweet creature. O yes, very! but far too soft and helpless for such a charge as this property, unless she had her father or brother to help her. But I must tell you that she took me to see her baby, a nice little lively thing, poor little dear! and when we were alone, she

spoke rather more, begged me to send her godson to see her, thanked me for coming, but crying stopped her from saying more. I could grow very fond of her. No, I don't wonder at him, for there is a great charm in anything so soft and dependent.'

Decidedly, Mary Ross had been right when she said, that except Sir Guy, there was no one so difficult to know as Amy.

In the afternoon, Charles insisted on Amabel's going out for fresh air and exercise, and she liked the idea of a solitary wandering; but Philip, to her surprise, offered to come with her, and she was too glad to see him exert himself, to regret the musings she had hoped for; so out they went, after opening the window, to give Charles what he called an airing, and he said, that in addition he should 'hirple about a little to explore the ground-floor of the house.'

'We must contrive some way for him to drive out,' said Philip, as he crossed the court with Amabel; 'and you too. There is no walk here, but up hill or down.'

Up hill they went, along the path leading up the green slope, from which the salt wind blew refreshingly. In a few minutes, Amabel found herself on a spot which thrilled her all over.

There lay before her, Guy's own Redclyffe bay; the waves lifting their crests and breaking, the surge resounding, the sea-birds skimming round, the Shag Rock dark and rugged, the scene which seemed above all the centre of his home affections, which he had so longed to show her, that it had cost him an effort on his death-bed to resign the hope; the leaping waves that he said he would not change for the white-headed mountains. And now he was lying among those southern mountains, and she stood in the spot where he had loved to think of seeing her; and with Philip by her side. His sea, his own dear sea, the vision of which had cheered his last day, like the face of a dear old friend; his sea, rippling and glancing on, unknowing that the eyes that

had loved it so well would gaze on it no more ; the wind that he had longed for to cool his fevered brow, the rock which had been like a playmate in his boyhood, and where he had perilled his life, and rescued so many. It was one of the seasons when a whole gush of fresh perceptions of his feelings, like a new meeting with himself, would come on her, her best of joys ; and there she stood, gazing fixedly, her black veil fluttering in the wind, and her hands pressed close together, till Philip, little knowing what the sight was to her, shivered, saying it was very cold and windy, and without hesitation she turned away, feeling that now Redclyffe was precious indeed.

She brought her mind back to listen, while Philip was considering of means of taking Charles out of doors ; he supposed there might be some vehicle about the place ; but he thought there was no horse. Very unlike was this to the exact Philip. The great range of stables was before them, where the Morvilles had been wont to lodge their horses as sumptuously as themselves, and Amabel proposed to go and see what they could find ; but nothing was there but emptiness, till they came to a pony in one stall, a goat in another, and one wheelbarrow in the coach-house.

On leaving it, under the long-sheltered sunny wall, they came in sight of a meeting between the baby taking the air in Anne's arms, and Markham, who had been hovering about all day, anxious to know how matters were going on. His back was towards them, so that he was unconscious of their approach, and they saw how he spoke to Anne, looked fixedly at the child, made her laugh, and, finally took her in his arms, as he had so often carried her father, studying earnestly her little face. As soon as he saw them coming, he hastily gave her back to Anne, as if ashamed to be thus caught, but he was obliged to grunt and put his hand up to his shaggy eyelashes, before he could answer Amabel's greeting.

He could hardly believe his eyes, that here was Mr.

Morville, who yesterday was scarcely able to raise his head from the pillow, and could attend to nothing. He could not think what Lady Morville had done to him, when he heard him inquiring and making arrangements about sending for a pony carriage, appearing thoroughly roused, and the dread of being seen or spoken to entirely passed away. Markham was greatly rejoiced, for Mr. Morville's illness, helplessness, and dependence upon himself, had softened him and won him to regard him kindly as nothing else would have done; and his heart was entirely gained, when, after they had wished him good bye, he saw Philip and Amabel walk on, overtake Anne, Amy take the baby and hold her up to Philip, who looked at her with the same earnest interest. From thenceforward Markham knew that Redclyffe was nothing but a burden to Mr. Morville, and he could bear to see it in his possession, since, like himself, he seemed to regard Sir Guy's daughter like a disinherited princess.

This short walk fatigued Philip thoroughly. He slept till dinner-time, and when he awoke said it was the first refreshing dreamless sleep he had had for weeks. His head was much better, and at dinner he had something like an appetite.

It was altogether a day of refreshment, and so were the ensuing ones. Each day Philip became stronger, and resumed more of his usual habits. From writing a few lines in Amabel's daily letter to Laura, he proceeded to filling the envelope, and from being put to sleep by Charles's reading, to reading aloud the whole evening himself. The pony carriage was set up, and he drove Charles out every day, Amabel being then released from attending him, and free to enjoy herself in her own way in rambles about the house and park, and discoveries of the old haunts she knew so well by description.

She early found her way to Guy's own room, where she would walk up and down with her child in her arms, talking to her, and holding up to her to be ad-

mired, the treasures of his boyhood, that Mrs. Drew delighted to keep in order. One day, when alone in the sitting-room, she thought of trying the piano he had chosen for her. It was locked, but the key was on her own split-ring, where he had put it for her the day he returned from London. She opened it, and it so happened, that the first note she struck reminded her of one of the peculiarly sweet and deep tones of Guy's voice. It was like awaking its echo again, and as it died away, she hid her face and wept. But from that time the first thing she did when her brother and cousin were out, was always to bring down her little girl, and play to her, watching how she enjoyed the music.

Little Mary prospered in the sea air, gained colour, took to springing and laughing; and her intelligent lively way of looking about brought out continually more likeness to her father. Amabel herself was no longer drooping and pining; her step grew light and elastic; a shade of pink returned to her cheek, and the length of walk she could take was wonderful, considering her weakness in the summer. Every day she stood on the cliff and looked at 'Guy's sea,' before setting out to visit the cottages, and hear the fond rough recollections of Sir Guy, or to wander far away into the woods or on the moor, and find the way to the places he had loved. One day when Philip and Charles came in from a drive, they overtook her in the court, her cloak over her arm, her crape limp with spray, her cheeks brightened to a rosy glow by the wind, and a real smile as she looked up to them. When Charles was on his sofa she stooped over him and whispered, 'James and Ben Robinson have taken me out to the Shag!'

She saw Mr. Wellwood, and heard a good account of Coombe Prior. She made great friends with the Ashfords, especially little Lucy and the baby. She delighted in visits to the cottages, and Charles every day wondered where was the drooping dejection that

she could not shake off at home. She would have said that in Guy's own home, 'the joy' had come to her, no longer in fitful gleams and held by an effort for a moment, but steadily brightening. She missed him indeed, but the power of finding rest in looking forward to meeting him, the pleasure of dwelling on the days he had been with her, and the satisfaction of doing his work for the present, had made a happiness for her, and still in him, quiet, grave, and subdued, but happiness likely to bloom more and more brightly throughout her life. The anniversary of his death was indeed a day of tears, but the tears were blessed ones, and she was more full of the feeling that had sustained her on that morning, than she had been through all the year before.

Charles and Philip meanwhile proceeded excellently together, each very anxious for the comfort of the other. Philip was a good deal overwhelmed at first by the quantity of business on his hands, and setting about it while his head was still weak would have seriously hurt himself again, if Charles had not come to his help, worked with a thorough good will, great clearness and acuteness, and surprised Philip by his cleverness and perseverance. He was elated at being of so much use; and begged to be considered for the future as Philip's private secretary, to which the only objection was, that his handwriting was as bad as Philip's was good; but it was an arrangement so much to the benefit of both parties that it was gladly made. Philip was very grateful for such valuable assistance; and Charles amused himself with triumphing in his importance when he should sit in state on his sofa at Hollywell, surrounded with blue-books, getting up the statistics for some magnificent speech of the honourable member for Moorworth.

In the meantime, Charles and Amabel saw no immediate prospect of their party returning from Ireland, and thought it best to remain at Redclyffe, since Philip had so much to do there; and besides, events

were occurring at Kilcoran which would have prevented his visit, even without his illness.

One of the first drives that Charles and Philip took after the latter was equal to any exertion, was to Thorndale. There Charles was much amused by the manner in which Philip was received, and he himself, for his sake ; and, as he said to Amabel on his return, there was no question now, that the blame of spoiling Philip did not solely rest at Hollywell.

Finding only Lady Thorndale at home, and hearing that Lord Thorndale was in the grounds, Philip went out to look for him, leaving Charles on the sofa, under her ladyship's care. Charles, with a little exaggeration, professed that he had never been so flattered in his whole life, as he was by the compliments that reflected on him as the future brother-in-law of Philip ; and that he had really begun to think even Laura not half sensible enough of her own happiness. Lady Thorndale afterwards proceeded to inquiries about the De Courcy family, especially Lady Eveleen ; and Charles, enlightened by Charlotte, took delight in giving a brilliant description of his cousin's charms, for which he was rewarded by very plain intimations of the purpose for which her son James was gone to Kilcoran.

On talking the visit over as they drove home, Charles asked Philip if he had guessed at his friend's intentions. ' Yes,' he answered.

' Then you never took the credit of it. Why did you not tell us ?'

' I knew it from himself, in confidence.'

' Oh !' said Charles, amusing himself with the notion of the young man's dutifully asking the permission of his companion, unshaken in allegiance though the staff might be broken, and the book drowned deeper than did ever plummet sound. Philip spoke no more, and Charles would ask no more, for Philip's own affairs of the kind were not such as to encourage talking of other people's. No explanation was needed why he should now promote an attachment, which he had strongly

disapproved while James Thorndale was still in the army.

A day or two after, however, came a letter from Charlotte, bringing further news, at which Charles was so amazed, that he could not help communicating it at once to his companions.

‘So! Eveleen won’t have him!’

‘What?’ exclaimed both.

‘You don’t mean that she has refused Thorndale!’ said Philip.

‘Even so!’ said Charles. Charlotte says he is gone. ‘Poor Mr. Thorndale left us this morning, after a day of private conferences, in which he seems to have had no satisfaction, for his resolute dignity and determination to be agreeable all the evening were’—ahem—‘were great. Mabel cannot get at any of the real reasons from Eveleen, though I think I could help her, but I can’t tell you.’

‘Charlotte means mischief,’ said Charles, as he concluded.

‘I am very sorry!’ said Philip. ‘I did think Lady Eveleen would have been able to estimate Thorndale. It will be a great disappointment—the inclination has been of long standing. Poor Thorndale!’

‘It would have been a very good thing for Eva,’ said Amabel. ‘Mr. Thorndale is such a sensible man.’

‘And I thought his steady sense just what was wanting to bring out all her good qualities that are running to waste in that irregular home,’ said Philip. ‘What can have possessed her?’

‘Ay! something must have possessed her,’ said Charles. ‘Eva was always ready to be fallen in love with on the shortest notice, and if there was not something prior in her imagination, Thorndale would not have had much difficulty. By-the-bye, depend upon it, ’tis the tutor.’

Philip looked a little startled, but instantly reassuring himself, said,—

‘George Fielder? Impossible! You have never seen him!’

‘Ah! don’t you remember her description?’ said Amy, in a low voice, rather sadly.

‘The very reason, Amy,’ said Charles; ‘it showed that he had attracted her fancy.’

Philip smiled a little incredulously.

‘Ay!’ said Charles, ‘you may smile, but you handsome men can little appreciate the attractiveness of an interesting ugliness. It is the way to be looked at in the end. Mark my words, it is the tutor.’

‘I hope not!’ said Philip, as if shaken in his confidence. ‘Any way it is a bad affair. I am very much concerned for Thorndale.’

So sincerely concerned, that his head began to ache in the midst of some writing. He was obliged to leave it to Charles to finish, and go out to walk with Amy.

Amabel came in before him, and began to talk to Charles about his great vexation at his friend’s disappointment.

‘I am almost sorry you threw out that hint about Mr. Fielder,’ said she. ‘Don’t you remember how he was recommended?’

‘Ah! I had forgotten it was Philip’s doing, a bit of his spirit of opposition,’ said Charles. ‘Were not the boys to have gone to Coombe Prior?’

‘Yes,’ said Amabel, ‘that is the thing that seems to have made him so unhappy about it. I am sure I hope it is not true,’ she added, considering, ‘for, Charlie, you must know that Guy had an impression against him.’

‘Had he?’ said Charles, anxiously.

‘It was only an impression, nothing he could accuse him of, or mention to Lord Kilcoran. He would have told no one but me, but he had seen something of him at Oxford, and thought him full of conversation, very clever, only not the sort of talk he liked.’

‘I don’t like that. Charlotte concurs in testifying to his agreeableness; and in the dearth of intellect, I should not wonder at Eva’s taking up with

him. He would be a straw to the drowning. It looks dangerous !'

They were very anxious for further intelligence, but received none, except that Philip had a letter from his friend, on which his only comment was a deep sigh, and 'Poor Thorndale ! She little knows what she has thrown away !' Letters from Kilcoran became rare ; Laura scarcely wrote at all to Philip, and though Mrs. Edmonstone wrote as usual, she did not notice the subject ; while Charlotte's gravity and constraint, when she did achieve a letter to Charles, were in such contrast to her usual free and would-be satirical style, that such eyes as her brother's could hardly fail to see that something was on her mind.

So it went on week after week, Charles and Amabel wondering when they should ever have any notice to go home, and what their family could be doing in Ireland. October had given place to November, and more than a week of November had passed, and here they still were, without anything like real tidings.

At last came a letter from Mrs. Edmonstone which Amabel could not read without one little cry of surprise and dismay, and then had some difficulty in announcing its contents to Philip.

Kilcoran, Nov. 6th.

MY DEAREST AMY,—You will be extremely surprised at what I have to tell you, and no less grieved. It has been a most unpleasant, disgraceful business from beginning to end, and the only comfort in it to us is the great discretion and firmness that Charlotte has shown. I had better, however, begin at the beginning, and tell you the history as far as I understand it myself. You know that Mr. James Thorndale has been here, and perhaps you know it was for the purpose of making an offer to Eveleen. Every one was much surprised at her refusing him, and still more when, after much prevarication, it came out that the true motive was her attachment to Mr. Fielder, the tutor. It appeared

that they had been secretly engaged for some weeks, ever since they had perceived Mr. Thorndale's intentions, and not, as it was in poor Laura's case, an unavowed attachment, but an absolute engagement. And fancy Eva justifying it by Laura's example! There was of course great anger and confusion. Lord Kilcoran was furious, poor Lady Kilcoran had nervous attacks, the gentleman was dismissed from the house, and supposed to be gone to England, Eva shed abundance of tears, but after a great deal of vehemence she appeared subdued and submissive. We were all very sorry for her, as there is much that is very agreeable and likely to attract her in Mr. Fielder, and she always had too much mind to be wasted in such a life as she leads here. It seemed as if Laura was a comfort to her, and Lady Kilcoran was very anxious we should stay as long as possible. This was all about three weeks or a month ago; Eva was recovering her spirits, and I was just beginning a letter to tell you we hoped to be at home in another week, when Charlotte came into my room in great distress to tell me that Eveleen and Mr. Fielder were on the verge of a run-away marriage. Charlotte had been coming back alone from a visit to grandmamma, and going down a path out of the direct way to recall Bustle, who had run off, she said, as if he scented mischief, came, to her great astonishment, on Eveleen walking arm-in-arm with Mr. Fielder! Charlie will fancy how Charlotte looked at them! They shuffled, and tried to explain it away, but Charlotte was too acute for them, or rather, she held steadily to 'be that as it may, Lord Kilcoran ought to know it.' They tried to frighten her with the horrors of betraying secrets, but she said none had been confided to her, and mamma would judge. They tried to persuade her it was the way of all lovers, and appealed to Laura's example, but there little Charlotte was less to be shaken than on any point. 'I did not think them worthy to hear *their* names,' she said to me, 'but I told them, that I had seen that the truest and deepest of love had a horror of all that was like wrong, and as to

Philip and Laura, they little knew what they had suffered; besides, theirs was not half so bad.' I verily believe these were the very words she used to them. At last Eva threw herself on her mercy, and begged so vehemently that she would only wait another day, that she suspected, and, with sharpness very like Charlie's, forced from Eva that they were to marry the next morning. Then she said it would be a great deal better that they should abuse her and call her a spy than do what they would repent of all their lives; she begged Eva's pardon, and cried so much that Eva was in hopes she would relent, and then came straight to me, very unhappy, and not in the least triumphant in her discovery. You can guess what a dreadful afternoon we had, I don't think any one was more miserable than poor Charlotte, who stayed shut up in my room all day, dreading the sight of any one, and expecting to be universally called a traitor. The end was, that after much storming, Lord Kilcoran, finding Eveleen determined, and anxious to save her the discredit of an elopement, has agreed to receive Mr. Fielder, and they are to be married from this house on the 6th of December, though what they are to live upon no one can guess. The Kilcorans are very anxious to put the best face on the matter possible, and have persuaded us, for the sake of the family, to stay for the wedding; indeed, poor Lady Kilcoran is so completely overcome, that I hardly like to leave her till this is over. How unpleasant the state of things in the house is no one can imagine, and very, very glad shall I be to get back to Hollywell and my Amy and Charlie. Dearest Amy,

Your most affectionate,

L. EDMONSTONE.

The news was at length told, and Philip was indeed thunderstruck at this fresh consequence of his interference. It threatened at first to overthrow his scarcely recovered spirits, and but for the presence of his guests, it seemed as if it might have brought on a renewal of the state from which they had restored him.

‘Yes,’ said Charles to Amy, when they talked it over alone. ‘It seems as if good people could do wrong with less impunity than others. It is rather like the saying about fools and angels. Light-minded people see the sin, but not the repentance, so they imitate the one without being capable of the other. Here are Philip and Laura finishing off like the end of a novel, fortune and all, and setting a very bad example to the world in general.’

‘As the world cannot see below the surface,’ said Amy; ‘how distressed Laura must be! You see, mamma does not say one word about her.’

Philip had not much peace till he had written to Mr. Thorndale, who was going at once to Germany, not liking to return home to meet the condolences. Mrs. Edmonstone had nearly the whole correspondence of the family on her hands; for neither of her daughters liked to write, and she gave the description of the various uncomfortable scenes that took place, Lord de Courcy’s stern and enduring displeasure, and his father’s fast subsiding violence; Lady Kilcoran’s distress, and the younger girls’ excitement and amusement; but she said she thought the very proper and serious way in which Charlotte viewed it, would keep it from doing them much harm, provided, as was much to be feared, Lord Kilcoran did not end by keeping the pair always at home, living upon him till Mr. Fielder could get a situation. In fact, it was difficult to know what other means there were of providing for them.

At last the wedding took place, and Mrs. Edmonstone wrote a letter, divided between indignation at the foolish display that had attended it, and satisfaction at being able at length to fix the day for the meeting at Hollywell. No one could guess how she longed to be at home again, and to be once more with Charlie.

Nor were Charles and Amabel less ready to go home, though they could both truly say that they had much enjoyed their stay at Redclyffe. Philip was to come with them, and it was privately agreed that he should

return to Redclyffe no more till he could bring Laura with him. Amabel had talked of her sister to Mrs. Ashford, and done much to smooth the way ; and even on the last day or two, held a few consultations with Philip, as to the arrangements that Laura would like. One thing, however, she must ask for her own pleasure. 'Philip,' said she, 'you must let me have this piano.'

His answer was by look and gesture.

'And I want very much to ask a question, Philip. Will you tell me which is Sir Hugh's picture?'

'You have been sitting opposite to it every day at dinner.'

'That?' exclaimed Amy. 'From what I heard, I fully expected to have known Sir Hugh's in a moment ; and I often looked at that one, but I never could see more likeness than there is in almost all the pictures about the house.'

She went at once to study it again, and wondered more.

'I have seen him sometimes look like it ; but it is not at all the strong likeness I expected.'

Philip stood silently gazing, and certainly the countenance he recalled, pleading with him to desist from his wilfulness, and bending over him in his sickness, was far unlike in expression to the fiery youth before him. In a few moments more, Amabel had run up stairs, and brought down Mr. Shene's portrait. There was proved to be more resemblance than either of them had at first sight credited. The form of the forehead, nose, and short upper lip were identical, so were the sharply-defined black eye-brows, the colour of the eyes ; and the way of standing in both had a curious similarity ; but the expression was so entirely different, that strict comparison alone proved, that Guy's animated, contemplative, and most winning countenance, was in its original lineaments entirely the same with that of his ancestor. Although Sir Hugh's was then far from unprepossessing, and bore as yet no trace of his unholy passions, it brought to Amabel's mind the shudder

with which Guy had mentioned his likeness to that picture, and seemed to show her the nature he had tamed.

Philip, meanwhile, after one glance at Mr. Shene's portrait, which he had not before seen, had turned away, and stood leaning against the window-frame. When Amy had finished her silent comparison, and was going to take her treasure back, he looked up, and said, 'Do you dislike leaving that with me for a few minutes?'

'Keep it as long as you like,' said she, going at once, and she saw him no more till nearly an hour after; when, as she was coming out of her own room, he met her, and gave it into her hands, saying nothing except a smothered 'Thank you;' but his eyelids were so swollen and heavy, that Charles feared his head was bad again, while Amy was glad to perceive that he had had the comfort of tears.

Everyone was sorry to wish Lady Morville and her brother good bye, only consoling themselves with hoping that their sister might be like them; and as to little Mary, the attention paid to her was so devoted and universal, that her mamma thought it very well she should receive the first ardour of it while she was too young to have her head turned.

They again slept a night in London, and in the morning Philip took Charles for a drive through the places he had heard of, and was much edified by actually beholding. They were safely at home the same evening, and on the following, the Hollywell party was once more complete, gathered round Charles's sofa in a confusion of welcomes and greetings.

Mrs. Edmonstone could hardly believe her eyes, so much had Charles's countenance lost its invalid look, and his movements were so much more active; Amabel, too, though still white and thin, had a life in her eye and an air of health most unlike her languor and depression.

Everyone looked well and happy but Laura, and she

had a worn, faded, harassed aspect, which was not cheered even by Philip's presence ; indeed, she seemed almost to shrink from speaking to him. She was the only silent one of the party that evening, as they gathered round the dinner or tea-table, or sat divided into threes or pairs, talking over the subjects that would not do to be discussed in public. Charlotte generally niched into Amy's old corner by Charles, hearing about Redclyffe, or telling about Ireland ; Mrs. Edmonstone and Amy on the opposite sides of the ottoman, their heads meeting over the central cushion, talking in low, fond, inaudible tones ; Mr. Edmonstone going in and out of the room, and joining himself to one or other group, telling and hearing news, and sometimes breaking up the pairs ; and then Mrs. Edmonstone came to congratulate Charles on Amy's improved looks, or Charlotte pressed up close to Amy to tell her about grandmamma. For Charlotte could not talk about Eveleen, she had been so uncomfortable at the part she had had to act, that all the commendation she received was only like pain and shame, and her mother was by no means dissatisfied that it should be so, since a degree of forwardness had been her chief cause of anxiety in Charlotte ; and it now appeared that without losing her high spirit and uncompromising sense of right, her sixteenth year was bringing with it feminine reserve.

Laura lingered late in Amabel's room, and when her mother had wished them good night, and left them together, she exclaimed, ' Oh, Amy ! I am so glad to be come back to you. I have been so very miserable ! '

' But you see he is quite well,' said Amy. ' We think him looking better than in the summer.'

' O yes ! Oh, Amy, what have you not done ? If you could guess the relief of hearing you were with him, after that suspense ! ' But as if losing that subject in one she was still more eager about, ' What did he think of me ? '

' My dear,' said Amabel, ' I don't think I am the right person to tell you that.'

‘You saw how it struck him when he heard of my share in it.’

‘Yours? Mamma never mentioned you.’

‘Always kind!’ said Laura. ‘Oh, Amy! what will you think of me when I tell I knew poor Eva’s secret all the time! What could I do, when Eva pleaded my own case! It was very different, but she would not see it, and I felt as if I was guilty of all. Oh, how I envied Charlotte.’

‘Dear Laura, no wonder you were unhappy!’

‘Nothing hitherto has been equal to it!’ said Laura. ‘There was the misery of his silence, and the anxiety that you, dearest, freed me from; then no sooner was that over than this was confided to me. Think what I felt when Eva put me in mind of a time when I argued in favour of some such concealment in a novel! No, you can never guess what I went through, knowing that *he* would think me weak, blameable, unworthy!’

‘Nay, he blames himself too much to blame you.’

‘No, that he must not do! It was my fault from the beginning. If I had but gone at once to mamma!’

‘Oh, I am so glad!’ exclaimed Amy, suddenly.

‘Glad?’

‘I mean,’ said Amy, looking down, ‘now you have said that, I am sure you will be happier.’

‘Happier, now I feel and see how I have lowered myself even in his sight?’ said Laura, drooping her head and hiding her face in her hands, as she went on in so low a tone that Amy could hardly hear her. ‘I know it all now. He loves me still, as he must whatever he has once taken into that deep, deep heart of his; he will always; but he cannot have that honouring, trusting, confiding love that—you enjoyed and deserved, Amy—that he would have had if I had cared first for what became me. If I had only at first told mamma, he would not even have been blamed; he would have been spared half this suffering and self-reproach; he would have loved me more; Eva might not have been led astray; at least, she could not have laid it to

my charge,—and I could lift up my head,' she finished, as she hung it almost to her knees.

Her sister raised the head, laid it on her own bosom, and kissed the cheeks and brow again and again. 'Dearest, dearest Laura, I am so sorry for you; but I am sure you must feel freer and happier now you know it all, and see the truth.'

'I don't know!' said Laura, sadly.

'And at least you will be better able to comfort him.'

'No, no, I shall only add to his self-reproach. He will see more plainly what a wretched weak creature he fancied had firmness and discretion. Oh, what a broken reed I have been to him!'

'There is strength and comfort for us all to lean upon,' said Amy. 'But you ought to go to bed. Shall I read to you, Laura? you are so tired, I should like to come and read you to sleep.'

Laura was not given to concealments; that fatal one had been her only insincerity, and she never thought of doing otherwise than telling the whole of her conduct in Ireland to Philip. She sat alone with him the next morning, explained all, and entreated his pardon, humiliating herself so much, that he could not bear to hear her.

'It was the fault of our whole lifetime, Laura,' said he, recovering himself, when a few agitated words had passed on either side. 'I taught you to take my dictum for law, and abused your trust, and perverted all the best and most precious qualities. It is I who stand first to bear the blame, and would that I could bear all the suffering! But as it is, Laura, we must look to enduring the consequence all our lives, and give each other what support we may.'

Laura could hardly brook his self-accusation, but she could no longer argue the point; and there was far more peace and truth before them than when she believed him infallible, and therefore justified herself for all she had done in blind obedience to him.

CHAPTER XXII.

Thus souls by nature pitched too high,
By sufferings plunged too low,
Meet in the church's middle sky,
Halfway 'twixt joy and woe ;
To practise there the soothing lay,
That sorrow best relieves,
Thankful for all God takes away,
Humbled by all he gives.

CHRISTIAN YEAR.

ONE afternoon, late in April, Charles opened the dressing-room door, and paused a moment, smiling. There sat Amabel on the floor, before the fire, her hand stretched out, playfully holding back the little one, who, with scanty, flossy, silken curls, hazel eyes, and jet black lashes, plump, mottled arms, and tiny tottering feet, stood crowing and shouting in exulting laughter, having just made a triumphant clutch at her mamma's hair, and pulled down all the light, shining locks, while under their shade the reddening, smiling face recalled the Amy of days long gone by.

'That's right!' cried Charles, delighted, 'pull it all down. Out with mamma's own curls again!'

'No ; I can never wear my curls again,' said Amy, so mournfully, that he was sorry he had referred to them ; and perceiving this, she smiled sweetly, and pulling a tress to its full length, showed how much too short it was for anything but being put plainly under the cap, to which she restored it.

'Is Mrs. Henley come ?' she asked.

‘As large as life, and that is saying a good deal. She would make two of Philip. As tall and twice as broad. I thought Juno herself was advancing on me from the station.’

‘How did you get on with her?’

‘Famously; I told her all about everything, and how the affair is to be really quiet, which she had never believed. She could hardly believe my word, when I told her there was to be absolutely no one but ourselves and Mary Ross. She supposed it was for your sake, and I did not tell her it was for their own. It really was providential that the Kilcoran folk disgusted my father with grand weddings, for Philip never could endure one.’

‘Oh, Miss Mischief, there goes my hair again! You know Philip is excessively worried about Mr. Fielder. Lord Kilcoran has been writing to ask him to find him a situation.’

‘That is an article that they will be seeking all the rest of their lives,’ said Charles. ‘A man is done for when once he begins to look for a situation! Yes; those Fielders will be a drag on Philip and Laura for ever; for they don’t quite like to cast them off, feeling as he does that he led to her getting into the scrape, by recommending him; and poor Laura thinking she set the example.’

‘I wish Eva was away from home,’ said Amy, ‘for aunt Charlotte’s accounts of her vex Laura so much.’

‘Ay! trying to eat her cake and have it, expecting to to be Mr. Fielder’s wife, and reign as the earl’s daughter all the same. Poor thing! the day they get the situation will be a sad one for her. She does not know what poortith could will be like.’

‘Poor Eva!’ said Amy. ‘I dare say she will shine and be all the better for trouble. There is much that is so very nice in her.’

‘Ay, if she has not spoilt it all by this time,—as that creature is doing with your hair! You little monkey, what have you to say to me?’

‘Only to wish you good night. Come, baby, we must go to Anne. Good night, uncle Charles.’

Just as Amabel had borne off her little girl, Mrs. Edmonstone and Charlotte came in, after conducting Mrs. Henley to her room. Charlotte made a face of wonder and dismay, and Mrs. Edmonstone asked where Amy was.

‘She carried the baby to the nursery just before you came. I wish you had seen her. The little thing had pulled down her hair and made her look so pretty and like herself.’

‘How well her spirits keep up! She has been running up and down stairs all day, helping about everything. Well! we little thought how things would turn out.’

‘And that after all Amy would be the home-bird,’ said Charles. ‘I don’t feel as if it was wrong to rejoice in having her in this sweet, shady brightness, as she is now.’

‘Do you know whether she means to go to church to-morrow? I don’t like to ask.’

‘Nor I.’

‘I know she does,’ said Charlotte. ‘She told me so.’

‘I hope it will not be too much for her! Dear Amy.’

‘She would say it was wrong to have our heads fuller of her than of our bride,’ said Charles.

‘Poor Laura!’ said Mrs. Edmonstone. ‘I am glad it is all right at last. They have both gone through a great deal.’

‘And not in vain,’ added Charles. ‘Philip is——’

‘Oh, I say not a word against him!’ cried Mrs. Edmonstone. ‘He is most excellent; he will be very distinguished,—he will make her very happy. Yes.’

‘In fact,’ said Charles, ‘he is made to be one of the first in this world, and to be first by being above it; and the only reason we are almost discontented is, that we compare him with one who was too good for this world.’

‘It is not only that.’

‘Ah! you did not see him at Redclyffe, or you would do more than simply forgiving him as a Christian.’

‘I am very sorry for him.’

‘That is not quite enough,’ said Charles, smiling, with a mischievous air, though fully in earnest. ‘Is it, Charlotte? She must take him home to her mamma’s own heart.’

‘No, no, that is asking too much, Charlie,’ said Mrs. Edmonstone. ‘Only one ever was——’ then breaking off—‘and I can never think of Philip as I used to do.’

‘I like him much better now,’ said Charlotte.

‘For my part,’ said Charles, ‘I never liked him—nay, that’s too mild, I could not abide him; I rebelled against him, heart, soul, and taste. If it had not been for Guy, his fashion of goodness would have made me into an extract of gall and wormwood, at the very time you admired him, and yet a great deal of it was genuine. But it is only now that I have liked him. Nay, I look up to him, I think him positively noble and grand, and when I see proofs of his being entirely repentant, I perceive he is a thorough great man. If I had not seen one greater, I should follow his young man’s example and take him for my hero model.’

‘As if you wanted a hero model,’ whispered Charlotte, in a tone between caressing and impertinence.

‘I’ve had one!’ returned Charles, also aside.

‘Yes,’ said Mrs. Edmonstone, going on with her own thoughts, ‘unless there had been a great fund of real goodness, he would never have felt it so deeply. Indeed, even when I best liked Philip, I never thought him capable of such repentance as he has shown.’

‘If mamma wants to like him *very* much,’ said Charlotte, ‘I think she has only to look at our other company.’

‘Ay!’ said Charles, ‘we want no more explanation of the tone of the ‘thank you’ with which he answered the offer to invite his sister.’

‘One comfort is, she can’t stay long. She has got a committee meeting for the Ladies’ Literary and Scientific Association, and must go home for it the day after to-morrow,’ said Charlotte.

‘If you are very good, perhaps she will give you a ticket, Charlotte,’ said her brother, ‘and another for Bustle.’

Mrs. Henley was, meanwhile, highly satisfied with the impression she thought she was making on her aunt’s family, especially on Charles and Charlotte. The latter she patronized, to her extreme though suppressed indignation, as a clever, promising girl; the former, she discovered to be a very superior young man, a most valuable assistant to her brother in his business, and her self-complacency prevented her from finding out how he was playing her off, whenever neither Philip nor Laura were at hand to be hurt by it.

She thought Laura a fine-looking person, like her own family, and fit to be an excellent lady of the house; and in spite of the want of fortune, she perceived that her brother’s choice had been far better than if he had married that poor pale little Amabel, so silent and quiet that she never could make a figure anywhere, and had nothing like the substantive character that her brother must have in a wife.

Could Mrs. Henley have looked behind the scenes she would have marvelled.

‘One kiss for mamma, and one for papa,’ was Amy’s half-uttered morning greeting, as she lifted from her cot her little one, with cheeks flushed by sleep. Morning and evening Amy spoke those words, and was happy in the double kiss that Mary had learnt to connect with them; happy too in holding her up to the picture, and saying ‘papa,’ so that his child might never recollect a time when he had not been a familiar and beloved idea.

A little play with the merry child, then came Anne to take her away; and with a suppressed sigh, Amabel

dressed for the first time without her weeds, which she had promised to leave off on Laura's wedding-day.

'No, I will not sigh!' then she thought, 'it does not put me further from him. He would be more glad than any one this day, and so I must show some sign of gladness.'

So she put on such a dress as would be hers for life—black silk, and a lace cap over her still plain hair, then with real pleasure she put on Charles's bracelet, and the silver brooch, which she had last worn the evening when the echoes of Recoara had answered Guy's last chant. Soon she was visiting Laura, cheering her, soothing her agitation, helping her to dress in her bridal array, much plainer than Amy's own had been, for it had been the especial wish of both herself and Philip that their wedding should be as quiet and unlike Guy's as possible. Then Amabel was running down stairs to see that all was right, thinking the breakfast-table looked dull and forlorn, and calling Charlotte to help her to make it appear a little more festal, with the aid of some flowers. Charlotte wondered to see that she had forgotten how she shunned flowers last summer, for there she was flitting from one old familiar plant to another in search of the choicest, arranging little bouquets with her own peculiar grace and taste, and putting them by each person's place, in readiness to receive them.

It was as if no one else *could* smile that morning, except Mr. Edmonstone, who was so pleased to see her looking cheerful, in her altered dress, that he kissed her repeatedly, and confidentially told Mrs. Henley that his little Amy was a regular darling, the sweetest girl in the world, poor dear, except Laura.

Mrs. Henley, in the richest of all silks, looked magnificent and superior; Mrs. Edmonstone had tears in her eyes, and attended to every one softly and kindly, without a word; Charlotte was grave, helpful, and thoughtful; Charles watching every one, and intent on making things smooth; Laura looked fixed in the forced

composure which she had long ago learnt, and Philip,—it was late before he appeared at all, and when he came down, there was nothing so plainly written on his face as headache.

It was so severe that the most merciful thing was to send him to lie on the sofa in the dressing-room. Amabel said she would fetch him some camphor, and disappeared, while Laura sat still with her forced composure. Her father fidgetted, only restrained by her presence from expressing his fears that Philip was too unwell for the marriage to take place to-day, and Charles talked cheerfully of the great improvement in his general health, saying this was but a chance thing, and that on the whole he might be considered as quite restored.

Mrs. Henley listened and answered, but could not comprehend the state of things. Breakfast was over, when she heard Amabel speaking to Laura in the ante-room.

‘It will go off soon. Here is a cup of hot coffee for you to take him. I’ll call you when it is time to go.’

Amabel and Charlotte were very busy looking after Laura’s packing up, and putting all that was wanted into the carriage, in which the pair were to set off at once from church, without returning to Hollywell.

At the last moment she went to warn Philip it was time to go, if he meant to walk to church alone, the best thing for his head.

‘It is better,’ said Laura, somewhat comforted.

‘Much better for your bathing it, thank you,’ said Philip, rising; then, turning to Amy,—‘Do I wish you good-by now?’

‘No; I shall see you at church, unless you don’t like to have my blackness there.’

‘Would we not have our guardian angel, Laura?’ said Philip.

‘You know *he* would have been there,’ said Amy. ‘No one would have been more glad, so thank you for letting me come.’

‘Thank you for coming,’ said Laura, earnestly. ‘It is a comfort.’

They left her, and she stood a few minutes to enjoy the solitude, and to look from the window at her little girl, whom she had sent out with Anne. She was just about to open the window to call to her, and make her look up with one of her merry shouts of ‘Mamma!’ when Philip came out at the garden-door, and was crossing the lawn. Mary was very fond of him, flattered by the attention of the tallest person in the house, and she stretched out her arms, and gave a cry of summons. Amabel watched him turn instantly, take her from her nurse, and hold her in a close embrace, whilst her little round arms met round his neck. She was unwilling to be restored to Anne, and when he left her she looked up in his face, and unprompted, held up to him the primroses and violets in her hand.

Those flowers were in his coat when Amabel saw him again at church, and she knew that this spontaneous proof of affection from Guy’s little unconscious child was more precious to him than all the kindnesses she could bestow.

Little space was there for musing, for it was high time to set off for church. Mary Ross met the party at the wicket of the churchyard, took Charles on her arm, and by look and sign inquired for Amy.

‘Bright outwardly,’ he answered, ‘and I think so inwardly. Nothing does her so much good as to represent him. Did you wonder to see her?’

‘No,’ said Mary. ‘I thought she would come. It is the crowning point of his forgiveness.’

‘Such forgiveness that she has forgotten there is anything to forgive,’ said Charles.

Philip Morville and Laura Edmonstone stood before Mr. Ross. It was not such a wedding as the last. There was more personal beauty, but no such air of freshness, youth, and peace. He was, indeed, a very fine-looking man, his countenance more noble than it had ever been, though pale, and not only betraying the

present suffering of the throbbing, burning brow, but with the appearance of a careworn, harassed man, looking more as if his age was five-and-thirty, than eight-and-twenty. And she, in her plain white muslin and quiet bonnet, was hardly bridal-looking in dress, and so it was with her face, still beautiful and brilliant in complexion, but with the weight of care permanent on it, and all the shades of feeling concealed by a fixed command of countenance, unable, however, to hide the oppression of dejection and anxiety.

Yet to the eyes that only beheld the surface, there was nothing but prosperity and happiness in a marriage between a pair who had loved so long and devotedly, and after going through so much for each other's sake, were united at length, with wealth, honour, and distinction before them. His health was re-established, and the last spring had proved that his talents would place him in such a position as had been the very object of his highest hopes. Was not everything here for which the fondest and most aspiring wishes could seek? Yet for the very reason that there was sadness at almost every heart, not one tear was shed. Mrs. Edmonstone's thoughts were less engrossed with the bride than with the young slender figure in black, standing in her own drooping way, her head bent down, and the fingers of her right hand clasping tight her own wedding-ring, through her white glove.

The service was over. Laura hung round her mother's neck in an ardent embrace.

'Your pardon! O, mamma, I see it all now!'

Poor thing! she had too much failed in a daughter's part to go forth from her home with the clear, loving, hopeful heart her sister had carried from it! Mrs. Edmonstone's kiss was a full answer, however, a kiss unlike what it had been with all her efforts for many and many a month.

'Amy, pray that it may not be visited!' were the

last words breathed to her sister, as they were pressed in each other's arms.

Philip scarcely spoke, only met their kindnesses with grateful gestures and looks, and brief replies, and the parting was hastened that he might as soon as possible be able to be at rest.

His only voluntary speech was as he bade farewell to Amabel,—

‘My sister now!’

‘And *his* brother,’ she answered. ‘Good-bye!’

As soon as Amabel was alone in the carriage with Charles, she leant back, and gave way to a flood of tears.

‘Amy, has it been too much?’

‘No,’ she said, recovering herself; ‘but I am so glad! It was *his* chief desire. Now everything he wished is fulfilled.’

‘And you are free of your great charge. He has been a considerable care to you, but now he is safe on Laura's hands, and well and satisfactory; so you have no care but your daughter, and we settle into our home life.’

Amabel smiled.

‘Amy, I do wish I was sure you are happy.’

‘Yes, dear Charlie, indeed I am. You are all so very kind to me, and it is a blessing, indeed, that my own dear home can open to take in me and baby. You know *he* liked giving me back to you.’

‘And it is happiness, not only thinking it ought to be? Don't let me tease you, Amy, don't answer if you had rather not.’

‘Thank you, Charlie, it is happiness. It must be when I remember how very happy he used to be, and there can be nothing to spoil it. When I see how all the duties of his station worry and perplex Philip, I am glad he was spared from it, and had all his freshness and brightness his whole life. It beams out on me more now, and it was such perfect happiness

while I had him here, and it is such a pleasure and honour to be called by his name ; besides, there is baby. Oh ! Charlie, I must be happy—I am ; do believe it ! Indeed, you know I have you and mamma and all too. And, Charlie, I think he made you all precious to me over again by the way he loved you all, and sent me back, to you especially. Yes, Charlie, you must not fancy I grieve. I am very happy, for he is, and all I have is made bright and precious by him.'

'Yes,' said he, looking at her, as the colour had come into her face, and she looked perfectly lovely with eager, sincere happiness ; one of her husband's sweetest looks reflected on her face ; altogether, such a picture of youth, joy, and love, as had not been displayed by the bride that morning. 'Amy, I don't believe anything could make you long unhappy !'

'Nothing but my own fault. Nothing else can part me from him,' she whispered almost to herself.

'Yes ; no one else had such a power of making happy,' said Charles, thoughtfully. 'Amy, I really don't know whether even you owe as much to your husband as I do. *You* were good for something before, but when I look back on what I was when first he came, I know that his leading, unconscious as it was, brought out the stifled good in me. What a wretch I should have been ; what a misery to myself and to you all by this time ; and now, I verily believe, that since he let in the sunlight from heaven on me, I am better off than if I had as many legs as other people.'

'Better off ?'

'Yes. Nobody else lives in such an atmosphere of petting, and has so little to plague them. Nobody else has such a 'mamma,' to say nothing of silly little Amy, or Charlotte, or Miss Morville. And as to being of no use, which I used to pine about—why, when the member for Moorworth governs the country, I mean to govern him.'

‘I am sure you are of wonderful use to every one,’ said Amabel; ‘neither Philip nor papa could get on without you to do their writing for them. Besides, I want you to help me when baby grows older.’

‘Is that the laudable result of that great book on education I saw you reading the other day?’ said Charles. ‘Why don’t you borrow a few hints from Mrs. Henley?’

Amy’s clear, playful laugh was just what it used to be.

‘It is all settled, then, that you go on with us? Not that I ever thought you were going to do anything so absurd as to set up for yourself, you silly little woman; but it seems to be considered right to come to a formal settlement about such a grand personage as my Lady Morville.’

‘Yes; it was better to come to an understanding,’ said Amabel. ‘It was better that papa should make up his mind to see that I can’t turn into a young lady again. You see Charlotte will go out with him and be the Miss Edmonstone for company, and he is so proud of her liveliness and—how pretty she is growing—so that will keep him from being vexed. So now you see I can go on my own way, attend to baby, and take Laura’s business about the school, and keep out of the way of company, so that it is very nice and comfortable. It is the very thing that Guy wished!’

Amabel’s life is here pretty well shown. That of Philip and Laura may be guessed at. He was a distinguished man, one of the most honoured and respected in the country, admired for his talents and excellence, and regarded universally as highly prosperous and fortunate, the pride of all who had any connexion with him. Yet it was a harassed, anxious life, with little of repose or relief; and Laura spent her time between watching him and tending his health, and in the cares and representation befitting her station, with little space for domestic pleasure and home

comfort, knowing her children more intimately through her sister's observation than through her own.

Perfect and devoted as ever was their love, and they were thought most admirable and happy people. There was some wonder at his being a grave, melancholy man, when he had all before him so richly to enjoy, contrary to every probability when he began life. Still there was one who never could understand why others should think him stern and severe, and why even his own children should look up to him with love that partook of distant awe and respect, one to whom he never was otherwise than indulgent, nay, almost reverential, in the gentleness of his kindness, and that was Mary Verena Morville.

THE END.







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